

Who Is This Guy Who Commands Follow Me?

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[0:00] Well, I don't know about you guys, but I have a lot of firecrackers going off around my house, and not small ones, big ones. I was working in my backyard yesterday, and one exploded, and it caused my heart to beat a little faster.

Well, Independence Day is upon us. We've got a parade afterwards. I'm looking forward to that. It's going to come right down 60th, take a left on Sheridan Road. I hope you can stay for that afterwards and enjoy that together.

But as you know, Independence Day is a celebration of our country in which we celebrate our independence, the birth of our nation. And this year, if I did the math right, which is always under suspect, we've been 241 years as a nation.

So if 1776 is the date of our first birthday, we're 241 years in. We are a nation that we distanced ourselves from a reign of a man named King George III, and that was a bloody mess.

We became a nation at the shedding of blood. Blood separated us from Great Britain so that we could become our own nation.

[1:25] And so this morning, in anticipation of July 4th, let's celebrate our freedoms, especially as Christians. We have the freedom to gather.

Did you know that today, in North Korea, Christians will gather in a latrine so they don't have to suffer for being a follower of Jesus? We don't fear that.

So we celebrate that. But today, let's pledge our ultimate allegiance to the greatest of all kings, who is gathering for himself a whole new people by the blood that he has shed for us.

His name is Jesus, and he is the Christ, the King, the long-anticipated one. And not only did he die, but he was raised, and he's reigning today, gathering a people for himself.

As we've been working through the Gospel of Matthew, we can't help but ask the question, Who is this guy, Jesus? And this morning, we're going to approach Matthew 16, asking the question, Who is this guy?

[2:35] And Matthew 16 is going to show us through again and again that this is the Christ. And so last week, we looked at Peter's confession.

This week, we're going to go all the way back to chapter 16, verse 1, And we're going to walk through four different little passages in anticipation for next week when we hear Jesus call us to follow him, to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses, and to follow him always and in everything. And so this morning, what I want to help you to see is, Who is this guy? He is the Christ. And what gives him the right to call us, to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow him, what gives him the right is who he is and what he has done.

So this morning, let's look at these four different sections of Matthew 16, starting with a challenge to the Christ.

Would you open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 16, verses 1 through 4? I'm going to read that. I'm going to come back, and we'll just kind of walk through it.

[3:53] So Matthew chapter 16, 1 through 4, Remember, he's speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees.

An adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. So he left them and departed.

Now, as we've been working our way through the Gospel of Matthew, you may have just noticed that a new group of people has been introduced, the Sadducees. And a way to remember who the Sadducees are is to remember it this way.

They were sad, you see, because they didn't believe in a resurrection. The Pharisees did. So the Pharisees believed in a resurrection.

The Sadducees, who were sad, you see, because they didn't believe in a resurrection, they were at theological odds. But not here. Did you notice?

[5:12] Jesus, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, came together to test Jesus. Jesus has this uncanny way of uniting people who are at odds with each other.

They unite in against him, in opposition to him. We'll see that if you know the Gospel of Luke, Pilate and Herod become friends at the end of Jesus' life, because they met each other and got to know another, worked some things out.

Jesus has a way of uniting people for him and against him. Well, these two groups of people, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who are normally opposed to each other, they unite to oppose Jesus. And they came to test him, to challenge him. They're asking Jesus to show them a sign from heaven. And basically what they're saying is, hey, show us proof, demonstrate that you're legit. And in verses 2 and 3, Jesus responds by appealing to the weather. He says, hey, you guys can read the signs in the sky. You know if it's going to rain.

[6:18] You know if it's going to be threatening. Red sky at night or red sky and threatening in the morning. You know all these things. But then he says, if you look at verse 4, no, excuse me, at the end of verse 3, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

Hey, you guys can read the weather just fine, but you cannot understand the signs of the times, namely that the age of the Messiah has come, that the kingdom of heaven has drawn near in me. You can't see it. Jesus goes on to say that their demand for a sign is just evidence that they're part of this evil and adulterous generation.

They were asking for a sign, and even if Jesus did give them a sign, they would not have believed. They didn't believe. But Jesus doesn't leave them empty-handed.

If you look at verse 4, he says, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. This is the second time Jesus has referenced the sign of Jonah.

[7:27] He talked about it earlier in Matthew chapter 12. And if you remember Jonah, Jonah was a prophet on the run. He gets swallowed by a whale, is in the whale for three days, and he gets spit out by the whale, not in chunks.

And he wasn't dead. He was alive. He was in the belly of a whale for three days, and he came out alive. And so what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 12, and here is, do you know what the sign of Jonah is?

That Jesus won't, it's not a belly of a whale, the belly, the heart of the earth for three days, and he spends three days in the earth in a tomb, and he comes out alive.

The sign of Jonah is pointing to the resurrection of Jesus. And so what Jesus is saying, these Pharisees and Sadducees, is that, hey, you want a sign?

I'll give you a sign. It's the sign of Jonah, and we know that he's talking about his resurrection. They don't know. It's veiled to them. But what he veils here is going to be unveiled in verse 21.

[8:38] We'll wait on that. Now let me ask you a question. Have you ever asked this question, or has someone come up to you asking a question like this? You know what?

I would believe in Jesus if only God would give me a sign that it's true. Someone comes up, you know what? I have a hard time with this Christianity thing, but if God gave me a sign, I would believe it.

Do you know how you answer that question? God has given you a sign. It's the sign of Jonah. It's the resurrection of Jesus. It either happened or it didn't.

One of the central claims of Christianity is that Jesus is the Christ who was crucified on a Roman cross, and three days later he was raised bodily from the dead, and that he's reigning right now and will one day come back.

Now if the resurrection of Jesus didn't happen, Christianity is a waste of your time. But if the resurrection of Jesus did happen, that points that Jesus is who we claim to be, the Christ, the Son

of the living God, fully God, fully man, one mediator between God and man, and that the death he died on the cross isn't just a historical event.

[9:59] It actually accomplished something. It accomplished a salvation, the salvation for sinners. So did you come in looking for a sign this morning to believe?

A sign has been given. All people. Jesus died on a cross, and he was raised from the dead. Who is this guy that responds to a challenge like that?

He's the Christ. Let's look at the next section. Jesus, the Christ, cautions his disciples. Look at verses 5 through 12.

When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Oh, no. Jesus said to them, Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, We brought no bread. But Jesus, aware of this, said, Oh, you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive?

[11:05] Do you not remember the five loaves for the 5,000 and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the 4,000 and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I do not speak about bread?

Beware of the leaven of these Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

So here's what's going on. After being tested in Magadan, Jesus gets into a boat with the disciples and they start to cross the Sea of Galilee again.

They're going to be heading north. They're going to end up in Caesarea Philippi. But when they reach the other side, the disciples realize, Oh, we do not have any bread.

There wasn't a panera there. What are they going to do? Jesus takes the opportunity to kind of pull on the bread theme and he says, Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[12:11] Leaven was used to bake bread. The disciples take what Jesus says very literally. We brought no bread. Apparently the disciples thought that Jesus was referring to some kind of bread that they had gotten from the Pharisee and Sadducee bakery that they had forgotten.

In verse 8, Jesus says, Oh, you little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves that you have no bread? And he goes on in verses 9 and 10 to ask some rhetorical questions and they are to make a point.

And it's basically saying this, If we were talking about bread guys and you guys forgot bread, do you guys not remember that I fed 5,000, fed 4,000 just guys?

I mean, if you add it all up together, we're talking about 20,000 people that I multiplied bread for. If we were lacking bread guys, I could make it happen. But we're not talking about bread.

He says, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And in verse 12, the lights go on for the disciples and they realize that the leaven is a reference to teaching.

[13:27] Jesus is warning them, cautioning them about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And that makes us ask the question, Well, what was so wrong with the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees?

Well, if you were to flip your Bible forward to Matthew chapter 23, you would see Jesus pronouncing woes upon the Pharisee.

Woe is you. He decries the Pharisees for shutting the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, for misleading the people, for neglecting the weightier matters of the law, for ignoring the sinful desires of the heart, for emphasizing outward appearance, self-righteousness, for saying the very opposite of what they were doing.

They were being hypocrites. They were tying heavy burdens and laying them on people's shoulders without lifting a finger to help. And it's all communicated through their teaching and lives.

They were teaching a religious system that cultivated self-righteousness. It cultivated a reliance on yourself to make you acceptable in God's sight.

[14:43] And not only did it just blow people's brains up with pride, it also isolated and was hurtful to those who were harassed and helpless on

the fringes of the culture.

But most of all, their teaching rejected Jesus. They denied that Jesus was the Christ. And if you can recall, they would even attribute his miracles to Satan. So it's with good reason that Jesus warns his disciples against the misleading teachings of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. their teaching is shutting the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. It was a false hope. It was a false gospel.

The good news they were proclaiming wasn't centered on Jesus. So they were promoting what's called a gospel of works.

[15:48] That you earn your salvation. So Jesus here warns his disciples against a false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And I just want to take a moment to caution you about a different kind of leaven that is in our culture. A different kind of teaching that you do not want to consume.

It's called the prosperity gospel. It also goes by the name health and wealth gospel. It also goes by name it and claim it.

And what this teaching promotes is that it's God's will for believers to be physically healthy, materially wealthy, and personally happy this side of heaven.

And you must be healthy, wealthy, and happy. this teaching kind of moves along the lines of encouraging believers to demand God to bless them.

[16:58] This teaching teaches that you give in order to get a return. they teach that Jesus' death on the cross, his atonement, was done in order that you could be healthy, wealthy, and happy today.

It's your right. It's part of what Jesus did for you now. And here's what the, what this does. this teaching makes Jesus' death and resurrection, it becomes a motivation and a justifying of greed and self-occupation in the church.

And it's the complete opposite of what the gospel is meant to do. It's to free us from greed and make us generous. It is to liberate us from the worship of ourselves so that we can worship the one true living God.

The prosperity gospel will say things like this, what has God done for me lately? It essentially makes God into a divine sugar daddy.

[18:22] it contradicts and undermines the gospel of grace. We have, G1 and Caitlin Rye have come from Nepal and they've been staying with us for some time and it's been really sweet to get to know them.

And some of our conversations have gone along the lines of Christianity and of the church in Nepal and the influence of American Christianity on the church of Nepal.

And one of the things that American Christianity is exporting very well to a place like Nepal is the prosperity gospel. We have teachers flying in on private jets into Kathmandu who then teach the prosperity gospel, collect a big sum of money, and then they're out two days later.

The prosperity gospel comes in on the internet and on TVs and it becomes what Christians there see and think to be normal Christianity. It's 11 that hurts.

It's a false teaching that gives a false hope. It's confusing, it's not true, it's distracting, it's unhealthy, it undermines the church in its witness.

[19:42] I want to encourage you to pursue something. There is a website, it's called the gospelcoalition.org and it is a treasure trove of information.

If you have questions about the prosperity gospel, this leaven that you need to be aware of, go to the gospelcoalition.org, type in prosperity gospel into the search bar and you will find some very helpful resources, not only to help you understand it, but to help recognize it.

We live in a culture in which the prosperity gospel has great influence and we must be aware of it and we must steer clear of it and we must tell our friends and family, don't consume that, you spit it out because it's not good for you.

Who is this guy? Who is this guy, Jesus, who tells his disciples, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees? He's the Christ and he's very concerned about what his people take in as what is true. Teaching matters. What you believe matters. Moving on, we move from this caution by the Christ to Peter's confession of the Christ and we looked at that this last week so I'm just going to be very brief here.

[21:20] In verses 13 through 20, Jesus and his disciples are in Caesarea Philippi. It's a city named after Caesar and Jesus in verse 14 asks his disciples who do people say that the Son of Man is and his disciples respond by saying something to think Santa.

Well, they think that you're a prophet of some sort. And then in verse 15, Jesus asks, but who do you say that I am? And in verse 16, Simon Peter says, you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

And what Peter is saying there is, you are the long-awaited Messiah. Messiah. You are the King, the one who would sit on David's throne, who would establish a new kingdom that will reign forever. You're that anointed one. Jesus goes on to pronounce blessing. Blessed are you, Simon Barjona. Why? For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And he can't miss the irony here because those heart-of-heart Pharisees and Sadducees, when they ask for a sign, they are given no sign.

[22:37] Jesus is like, no sign for you, except the sign of Jonah. But here, Peter is given a revelation from heaven, from my Father who is in heaven, that leaves no question to the true identity of Jesus.

Why would God reveal Jesus the Christ to Peter and his disciples, but not to the Pharisees and Sadducees? Would you flip back to Matthew chapter 11?

Verses 25 and 26, Jesus is speaking to his Father. He says, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you've hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children, those of humble heart.

And then in verse 26, yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. Why would he reveal the Christ to Peter and his disciples? It was according to his gracious will.

But Jesus doesn't stop here. He goes on to remind Simon of the name he gave them when they first met, Peter, Petros. And that on this Petra, this rock, Jesus is going to build his church.

[23:55] And Jesus is going to entrust him with some keys. Keys of the kingdom.

And what Jesus is referring to is the truth of the gospel. The truth of who he is and the truth of what he would do. And so when the gospel is proclaimed, it will either be humbly received or it will be pridefully rejected.

What that means is this. Those who humbly embrace Jesus as the Messiah, the gospel keys open up the kingdom to them. But to those who pridefully reject Jesus as the Messiah, the gospel keys shut them out of the kingdom.

What I particularly love about what Jesus is saying here is found in this promise. I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

This is a promise that Jesus is making. You know what he's saying? Even death cannot overcome my church, my people that I've purchased with my blood.

[25:20] He's saying that the church will never end. Now if you think about the founders of our nation, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, guys like that.

Can you think of anywhere where they would say something to the extent of, I promise to the American people and I ensure with my power that America, the United States of America will go on forever and ever and ever and the gates of hell will not overcome that nation.

Nowhere. Our founding fathers are unable to make that kind of promise. But the founder of our faith, Jesus Christ, not only made that promise, he is able to ensure that promise because he's the Christ.

He died and was raised. Our resilience as a church is linked to his resilience as a risen king. It's an amazing promise.

And so he's building his church today. He's building his church here in Kenosha, in Kathmandu, Nepal, Guadalajara, Mexico, Pyongyang, North Korea, Moscow, Russia, Tehran, Iran, and even in Washington, D.C.

[26:47] He's building his church. And he will continue to build it until he returns. Who is this guy?

He's the Christ, the son of the living God. And he makes promises that no one else can make. And he keeps them. Now, would you look at verses 21 through 23?

Because the Christ makes a very important clarification at this point. From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you. But he, Jesus, turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. We just looked at a passage where Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, and it's a revelation from the Father. And now, Peter gets rebuked for representing satanic activity.

[28:06] We are left saying, the disciples, at the end of verse 20, they buy in.

They believe he's the Christ. They're on board. His true identity's been revealed. They've got his identity right. They know who he is.

But they've got a major misunderstanding. And the major misunderstanding is how he's going to establish his kingdom. And Jesus knows this about his disciples.

He knows that they think that, that they think the Messiah will come in power and glory to set up his kingdom. And it's true. When Jesus comes back a second time, he's going to come in power and glory and to establish his kingdom forever.

forever. But what Jesus is doing here is preparing his disciples to understand the work the Messiah has right now.

[29:14] He's going to have to go to Jerusalem, and he's going to have to suffer, and he's going to have to die, and he's going to have to be raised from the dead. Now, this would have been a foreign concept to Peter and his guys.

This is the first reference Jesus makes to his coming death and resurrection. There's three others to come. And it's all in preparing his disciples for why he is going to, what's going to happen in Jerusalem.

What I want you to notice in verse 21 is that word must. From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer, be killed, and on the third day, be raised.

Think about it as a divine must. It's got to happen. Jesus must go to Jerusalem because it's part of his father's plan to rescue a people from every nation and tribe around the world.

It's got to happen. This plan of God for the Messiah to go to Jerusalem, to suffer, to be crucified, that's not plan B.

[30:29] That's the only plan. It's not like when Adam and Eve fell, God said, oh no, we got to go to plan B. Before the foundation of the world, God the Father had set in place a plan to save a people through the death of the Messiah.

There's only one way for Jesus to fulfill the God, the Father's plan. It's to go and suffer and be crucified. So Jesus is to go to Jerusalem.

Could you imagine if you're the disciples hearing that for the first time? Okay guys, you guys are right, I'm the Messiah. I got to go to Jerusalem now. They might be thinking, oh yeah, let's go buddy.

Let's go. Messiah, take over David's throne. Let's rock this place. Let's rock this place. And then he starts to say things like this. I got to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes.

The elders and chief priests, and scribes, it was a body of leaders called the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem that would make decisions for the Jewish people at the time.

[31:42] So they hear that, and maybe they're thinking like this, okay, okay, the Christ goes to Jerusalem to take David's throne. There's probably going to be some fighting and some suffering going on there. Okay, I got it, I got it. We can deal with that.

And then when Jesus starts telling them that he's going to be killed, Jesus, wait a second here, because I thought that you're going to establish your kingdom on Peter, the rock, and death is not going to prevail against it.

What are you talking about? You're going to die now. In chapter 20, verse 19, Jesus reveals then the kind of death he's going to die.

It's by crucifixion. And if you're familiar with the way the Jewish mind thought about crucifixion, to be killed on a tree was cursing. It was scandalous.

So not only is the Messiah going to die, he's going to die in a really ugly, gross, disgusting kind of way. And not just that, three days later he's going to be raised from the dead.

[32:48] Now I'm guessing at this point the disciples when they're hearing Jesus talk about that, they're kind of stuck on the Messiah dying. So like, what, raised from the dead three days later? I'm still stuck on you dying, Jesus the Christ.

But after the resurrection when the disciples would recall these words, they will reknow that these were prophetic. The Messiah had to die.

He must go to Jerusalem. He must suffer. He must be crucified. He must be raised again because God's plan of salvation required it.

Jesus was obeying his father. He's adjusting his disciples' thinking. God's great plan for the ages, the salvation for the nations would focus on the Jewish Messiah who would be crucified and raised. In verse 22, look at Peter's reaction. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

[34:01] It's not like Peter is saying, please, would you mind clarifying for this, Jesus? I think I misunderstood you. What he does is he takes him aside so it's just Peter and Jesus and Peter's saying, oh Lord, may it never be.

This is never going to happen. Nope, not going to happen. In Greek, it's a double negative. It goes, never, no, ever, never. Emphatic. This isn't going to happen, buddy.

And what Peter's doing there, he's elevating himself above the Christ. He's saying, hey, I got this thing right. You got it wrong. Sorry, Jesus, this isn't going to happen. Messiah, you're mistaken.

In verse 23, look how Jesus responds. Jesus turns. It's just Jesus and Peter and Jesus turns to Peter and says, get behind me, Satan.

Why would Jesus use that kind of language with Peter who has just confessed that he's the Christ? Why so harsh? Do you remember Satan's tactic back in Matthew chapter 4 when he tempted Jesus?

[35:18] Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the nations. If only he would just bow and worship him, Satan. And what Satan was offering Jesus at that moment was you can have all the kingdoms of the world without having to suffer, without having to be crucified, just bow before me, skip all the suffering, Jesus, and you can have all the nations.

Peter has no idea what he's doing, what he's saying. He's got the things of man on his mind, not the things of God. Jesus knows exactly what's going on here.

And so what Jesus says is get behind me, Satan. Do you know what's at stake here? The salvation of mankind.

If Jesus took Peter's advice, we would still be in our sins. The Messiah had to suffer and die.

He goes on to say you are a hindrance to me. It's that word skandalon in Greek. It's the trigger of a trap. It's the bait that when taken snaps a trap shut.

[36:38] And so Jesus is saying, Peter, get behind me. You are, Satan, get behind me. You are tempting me into a trap that will undermine God's plan of salvation for all the sinners of the world.

You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. You don't have a heavenly perspective. You don't know what's going on here, Peter. I do. I'm the Messiah. I'm your master.

Get behind me. Follow me. Let me do what I have come to do, and that is to die, to go to Jerusalem, to suffer, to die, and to be raised.

What a rebuke. Jesus is saying, you're not going to distract me from what I must do for the glory of God and the good of all people.

We do this still today. We set our minds on the things of man. Instead of embracing what God deems most important, His glory, made known through the gospel to all sinners in all nations, we have a tendency to embrace what the world deems most important.

[37:56] When Jesus says, you're not setting your mind on the things of God, what Jesus is saying is you don't have God's agenda first and

foremost in your mind and heart.

God's agenda, His plan, His purposes, His priorities are all revealed in this all-authoritative book. He's made His will known. And all of these words point somehow, some way to Jesus, the Christ, through whom God offers salvation to all people.

man's agenda, purpose, plan, and priorities tend to originate in man or Satan and they usually are denying of God or ignoring of God.

They tend to be God-less and what we need to be aware of is that we will inadvertently adopt the culture mindset around us and think the way that the world thinks.

[39:09] It's that classic frog in the kettle illustration. The danger is oftentimes we pull in man thinking, we absorb it.

It's not a conscious decisions we make. That's why it's so dangerous. we will set our minds on the things of man instead of the things of God without even realizing it.

So you know what that means for us? We've got to be crystal clear on God's agenda. His glory revealed in the salvation for sinners in Christ alone.

That's his agenda. that's his agenda among the nations. Now, in order for us to be on God's agenda, let your eyes fall on verse 24.

If anyone would come after me, if anyone would live for what I live for, if anyone would want to be following after me in pursuit of God's glory, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

[40:43] In order to live for God in his glory, we have got to die to ourselves and follow Jesus. God's to live to live in the world.

This morning, we've looked at the challenge to the Christ, and he gave the sign of Jonah. We looked at his caution to the leaven of the Pharisees, got to watch out for the prosperity gospel. The Christ was confessed by Peter. He's going to build his church, and Jesus clarifies that he, the Christ, didn't come to set up a kingdom by political power or military might, but by suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Next week, we're going to look at the costly call. Let's pray. God in heaven, great triune God, you are glorious in all that you are, and your plan of salvation that focuses on Jesus, it is absolutely worth dying for.

God, I do pray that you would help us, your people, understand and live for the things of God, not the things of man. God, I do pray on this Independence Day weekend that we would rejoice in being citizens of this country, but we would rejoice more in being citizens of heaven with a risen king who's going to come back and we will see face to face.

[42:26] It's in his name we pray, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.