

The Real Question

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[0 : 00] Welcome to another Sermon on the Web from St. John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church in Vancouver, Canada.

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The following message is from the January 21, 2001 service at St. John's Shaughnessy. The Reverend Felix Orji delivered his message from the book of Matthew, the 16th chapter, verses 16 to 21.

The title of the message is The Real Question. My plan this morning is to explain this particular reading.

And at the end of that explanation, I will give you an opportunity to respond to this message. And it's going to be very private.

[1 : 18] I'm going to invite you to pray. Nobody is going to ask you to walk down the aisle and cry your way to this place. I will remove the cringe factor. I will give you an opportunity to listen to this message.

I will give you two very significant questions. First, if you were to pause and think seriously about the first things in your life, the three or four things that matter most, what would they be?

If you were to pause for a moment and think seriously about the first things in your life, the three or four things that matter most, what would they be?

Second question. Are these things receiving the care and emphasis and time you really want to give to them? It's as important as the first one.

Now, from Stephen's perspective, Stephen Covey, the four things that are significantly important are to live, to love, to learn, and to live a legacy.

[2 : 57] To live, to love, to learn, and to live a legacy. You can call them the four L's. You can call them the four L's. And there is some truth in what he is saying here.

But it is important for us to also realize that it is possible to live, and to love, and to learn, and to live a legacy, and at the same time lose your life.

Jesus says this in verse 26 of that chapter. For what will it profit a man or a woman if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?

Or what shall a man give in return for his life? It is possible to gain the whole world by living a wonderful life, and by having people that you love and love you, and being very well educated, and living a wonderful legacy, and yet lose your life.

And Jesus said, what is the profit? And the answer to that question is nothing. Absolutely nothing. And so the question comes back to us.

[4 : 16] What is the fundamental need of humanity? What is it that takes priority over living a life, or loving, or learning, or living a legacy?

And I think the answer to that question, from God's perspective, is that it is to know Christ, and to follow him. When we know Christ, and when we follow him, we then can live, and love, and learn, and live a legacy that extends into eternity.

And of course, when we know Christ, or knowing Christ, and following him, it's so crucial, and so pivotal, because it determines the nature of your relationship with God, and the nature of my relationship with God.

It determines whether my relationship with God will be a relationship of enmity, or a relationship of friendship. It determines whether you and I will live a life in this world, and in the world to come, that is burdened with guilt, and a troubled conscience.

How I relate to Christ actually determines the quality of life in this world, and in the world to come. Knowing Christ, and following Christ, determines my eternal destiny, and your eternal destiny. [5 : 49] It's very, very important. And this is why Jesus poses the question to the disciples in verse 13. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do men say that the Son of Man is?

It's not an intellectual question. It's not something for the academia. It is something for all of us. Who do men say that the Son of Man is?

Everything hinges on the answer to that question. And they say, some say that you are John the Baptist, you've come back to life. It's kind of very African, it's kind of reincarnation.

John the Baptist has reincarnated, reincarnated, and in a particular Nigerian language, if you say that your father has come back to life, you say, my father has come back to life.

So it's very interesting here. John the Baptist has come back to life. Or Elijah, the messenger that will point to the kingdom of God, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

[6 : 59] And of course, when you think about our present society, you see the same parallel. If you ask the question, who do you say that Jesus is?

Some will say to you, Jesus was a great teacher, a philosopher, a prophet, and everything else. And of course, Fidel Castro would say that Jesus was the quintessence of a freedom fighter.

He was the best freedom fighter in the world. Judge Bernard Shaw believed that Jesus was a first-rate political economist who, among other things, recommended equal distribution.

That would be great. And of course, in our modern culture today, Jesus is very popular. And for many people, he is a convenient, swear word.

That's the only time we talk about him. And from God's perspective, all of these answers are fall short of who Jesus is.

[8 : 11] And that's why Jesus comes back to that question the second time. In verse 15, he says to his disciples, but who do you say that I am?

We've heard what the crowd are saying about Jesus. But who do you say that I am? See, it's a very personal and important question.

Because on the day that you and I will stand before God, and that's inevitable, the question that God will ask you is not what did the crowd say about Jesus.

Or what did your friends say about Jesus. The question, the fundamental question that determines your destiny that God will ask you is who did you say that Jesus is.

Jesus is who did you and I think it is very helpful for us to continue to remind ourselves that we will stand before God as individuals on that day.

[9 : 19] And Peter, one of the disciples, answered Jesus. He said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are not Elijah.

You are not just one of the prophets pointing to the coming of the kingdom of God. You are the kingdom of God. You are the Christ. It is in you that the kingdom of God that God has promised has come into being.

You are the Christ. You see, what Peter was confessing here is that Jesus Christ is not just a signpost or a prophet pointing forward to something.

He is the one that God the Father has anointed to be the king and the lord of the kingdom of God. In him, God's promised kingdom has come into reality.

Then has become now in Jesus Christ. And Peter was also saying that in Jesus or Jesus has been anointed of God, that's the meaning of the word Messiah or Christ, he has been anointed of God to reveal the Father, to reveal the will of the Father and to reveal the love and the compassion of God.

[10 : 39] And that's why Jesus attracted crowds. So when people saw Jesus, they saw the love of God. They saw the compassion of God. They saw the kindness and the graciousness of God.

And they saw God reaching out to them. And most importantly, Jesus was anointed to be the one who will set you and I free from the guilt and the power of sin.

So that's the point of verse 21. 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.

That's very important in our understanding of the Christ. You see, Jesus is explaining to his disciples and explaining to you and to me that the fundamental ministry of the Christ of God is not to

be a political liberator.

The fundamental meaning of the Christ of God is that he will come and he will suffer and he will die and on the third day he will rise from the dead.

[11 : 55] that is the gospel that Paul said to the Corinthians I preached to you and you believed this gospel and it is through this gospel that you are saved and you will continue to be saved.

Jesus died on the cross for you and for me. That's the prophecy of Isaiah several hundred years before Jesus came that Jesus will bear our iniquity and our sins will be upon him and through his death he shall bring many into the kingdom of God.

The question that faces you this morning is this. Do you want to live your life under the burden of sin and transgressions that have already been forgiven by Jesus Christ on the cross?

Wonderful question. Do you want to live your life in poverty when all the riches of the kingdom of God are before you waiting for you to receive it?

Do you want to live your life under the burden of a troubled conscience when Jesus when Jesus has taken that troubled conscience and sinfulness upon himself? The Bible says that through faith in Jesus it is possible for God to forgive you and forgive me.

[13 : 37] Through faith in Jesus it is possible that you will stop being an enemy of God and become a friend of God and be part of the wonderful family that God has put together.

It's a wonderful thing. And of course Jesus' response to this confession is dramatic. See, Jesus does not deny that he is the Christ.

Verse 20 is not a denial that he is the Christ. He strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. If he is saying that we should not say that he is the Christ there is no point preaching this morning.

But what Jesus is dealing with here was a historical situation in which the people of Israel at this time had basically the Fide Castro understanding of the Messiah.

The Messiah was going to come he would be a freedom fighter he would have political power and he is going to move the enemies of Israel out of the nation Israel and set the people free politically and economically.

[14 : 51] And this was not the time for the disciples of Christ to begin to say Jesus is the Christ to cause huge political problems. So Jesus said it's not the time.

And after his death Jesus gave them the permission to begin to speak about Christ. So Jesus is not denying that he is the Christ but he does highlight the importance of this confession.

And you see that in verse 17. It says blessed are you Simon Bajona. You see Peter's confession was so critical and so pivotal that Jesus pronounced a blessing on Peter.

Blessed are you. And the word blessing here has to do with God's declaration that you are indeed fortunate. That you are indeed approved of God.

And this is what happens when you and I make that confession that Jesus is the Christ. There is a divine heavenly declaration that you are blessed.

[15 : 59] The blessings of God the blessings of God's approval and God's kindness and favor come upon you. And secondly Jesus unveils the fact that this confession is a gift from God.

He says blood and flesh has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven. You see it is impossible to come to the knowledge of Christ when we depend on public opinion.

When we depend on the opinion polls and the voice of the crowd. Or even when we depend on our personal logic and intelligence it is impossible to come to know Jesus as the Christ.

Knowing Jesus as the Christ is a gift of God that is given to those who humble themselves before God and open themselves up to him.

And that's the testimony that we heard this morning. She said to God I need you. I don't know what I'm doing. And that's all we need to do. God I don't understand.

[17 : 10] I don't even know that Jesus is the Christ. Would you show me? See that's the attitude of Peter and God unveiled this to him. And as Michael said some months ago if you have even a percent doubt that Jesus is the Christ you owe it to yourself to investigate that.

If there's anything that even indicates that this might even be true and that your whole destiny depends on this you need to investigate this yourself.

Thirdly Jesus declares that on this revelation on this rock revelation that he will build a church that will not be overcome by the powers of death.

And you see that in verse 18 And I tell you you are Peter you are Petrus and on this rock Petra I will build my church and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.

Jesus is bringing a group of people together and these are people who will not be destroyed by the powers of death.

[18 : 26] See everyone who believes in Christ has an indestructible life. You belong to a community of people that the powers of death the powers of Satan the powers of hell cannot prevail.

That's the kind of people that God is bringing together. And when you come to believe in Jesus today or tomorrow you will become part of this company this church that is indestructible that will face eternity without fear.

And finally Jesus commissions Peter to give leadership to the ministry of proclaiming the truth of Christ. Verse 19 Peter is giving the keys.

And we all make jokes about the power of the keys. I used to be a Roman Catholic and I loved the power of the keys. The truth is that the keys here refer to the ministry of proclaiming the gospel. The ministry of proclaiming Jesus as the Christ. And what Jesus is saying here to Peter and to you and to me is that when you proclaim the message of Christ you are proclaiming a message that has the power to set people free from their sin and guilt.

[20 : 03] See the keys, the gospel are the keys that open the door to the kingdom of God. And every time that this gospel is being proclaimed the door is being opened so that you can be loosed from your sin and from your guilt.

but the gospel also has the power to bind you. Whenever the gospel is rejected and continues to be rejected the person is taking the option of remaining bound in his or her sin.

Your freedom from sin, your eternal destiny, your relationship with God and your entrance into the kingdom of God and your deliverance this morning depends on what you do with Jesus of Nazareth.

Is he a prophet or is he the Christ? And if this morning you want to believe and confess with Peter that Jesus is the Christ, the savior of the world and your savior, you will become a member of the church, you will be blessed of God and you also will be commissioned and given the power of the keys.

Every Christian has the power of the keys to proclaim deliverance to your friends and to neighbors around you. If you want to do that this morning, I invite you to pray.

[21 : 39] Let's bow our heads. I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer with me and pray silently.

Heavenly Father, I thank you that you love me so much that you sent your son Jesus the Christ into this world to set me free from sin and from the power of death.

I ask you for your forgiveness and as I confess this morning that Jesus is indeed the Christ, my Savior and my Lord, I ask that you would receive me and make me part of your church.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.

Amen. This MP3 sermon along with many others is available from the St. John's Shaughnessy website at www.stjohnshaughnessy.org. That address is www.stjohnsshau www.hughnessy.org On the website, you will also find information about ministries, worship services, and special events at St. John's Jaunessey.

[23 : 15] We hope that this message has helped you, and that you will share it with others. Thank you.