

## **Sermon Podcast.MP3**

**0:07**

Turn in your Bibles this morning to Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16 in just a moment, we're going to read verses 13 to 20 and we are now right in the middle of our series where we're talking about the sacred art of asking questions. And what we've said every week is that we believe God is big enough to handle our doubts, our difficulties and everything in between. This week marks a shift for us is what we're going to do for the rest of our time together is we are going to talk about questions, not that we ask of God, but questions that Jesus asks of us. Questions that I think properly considered can shape our lives to be rich and full and good.

**0:50**

As we begin our time together, it is always proper to read from the story, to read from the story of God and God's people, to read these words of Jesus. And so if you've got your Bibles, Matthew chapter 16 verses 13 to 20. Jesus came to Caesarea of Philippi and there He put this question to His disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is? John the Baptist, they replied, others say Elijah, others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets. What about you?

**1:23**

He asked them. Who do you say I am? Simon Peter answered, You're the Messiah, the Son of the living God. God's blessing on you, Simon son of John, answered Jesus. Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you, it was my father in heaven.

**1:41**

And I've got something to tell you too, you are Peter, the rock, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell won't overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you tie up on earth will have been tied up in heaven, and whatever you untie on earth will have been untied in heaven. And then He sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah. You guys, I live in a world that is filled with questions.

**2:14**

I live in a world that is filled with questions at work, people coming to me asking deep theological questions, asking practical questions about how do you go about running the day to day operations of the church. And then I go home in the afternoon to a 6 year old daughter whose favorite activity is asking me questions until I get tired and just go to sleep, right? I live in a world filled with questions and one of the things that I am absolutely certain of is this, that there are in fact only a handful of questions that we will be asked in our lives that have the ability to change us. There are only a handful of questions that we will be asked over the course of our lives that have the ability to fundamentally change who we are as human beings. I was talking to Sarah about these questions that shape us and form us a few nights ago and Evie, my 9 year old daughter was listening and she answered in like the most 9 year old girl way imaginable, what are the questions that can change our lives?

**3:16**

And she said, Dad, I know one, will you marry me? Right, you guys, come on, but think about it, think about this. Yesterday, I got to go do a wedding vow renewal for a couple that has been married for 50 years. Louis and Dina celebrated 50 years of marriage, and you reflect on 50 years. Could you have ever dreamed what your life would be like when you were asked that simple question, will you marry me?

**3:46**

You guys, there are only a few questions in life that have the ability to shift us and shape us into different sorts of people. Evie said, will you marry me? And then she said, dad, I know the second most important question. And I said, what is it? And she said, what's your favorite Taylor Swift song?

**4:05**

I don't know that that one is quite as important, but it's Welcome to New York in case you are curious, right? There's only a few questions that we will be asked over the course of our lives that have the ability to shape us, to form us, to ask deep probing questions. It's an essential part of being a human. At this point, what I read to you from Matthew chapter 16, Jesus has been with

His disciples for 3 years. We're approaching the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, the end of His physical bodily life with us.

#### **4:36**

And in Matthew chapter 16, Jesus is with His disciples and their normal home base is in the Galilee, but they've made a decision to go up into Caesarea Philippi in the northernmost portion of Israel. I want you to remember that for 3 years what the disciples have been doing is walking lock step with Jesus, they have left their lives behind and they've given every ounce of energy they have to going along the road with Jesus and so they have heard some of the most masterful teaching, no, the most masterful teaching that the world has ever known. They they have seen miracle after miracle, they have seen Jesus take people who are despondent and on the brink of death and he brings them back to life, that They have seen Jesus go into situations where there is tears and mourning and despair and out of that Jesus brings life. They've gotten to see incredible things and over the course of 3 years they've learned more and more about who Jesus is and about why he has come to live and to take on flesh among us. And we reach this moment in Matthew chapter 16 where Jesus is with the disciples in Caesarea Philippi and you can imagine it's a long walk to get up, it's like on the border with Syria.

#### **5:57**

And they get up there and Jesus looks at his disciples and he has this incredible way of asking deep and probing questions, getting to the heart of things. And He looks at His disciples and He says, you know, guys, you've been with me for 3 years, you've seen everything basically that there is to see with one notable exception coming. And I'm curious, who do people say that I am? What's the word on the street about me? And his disciples, you can imagine, trying to impress Jesus because undoubtedly they had heard all different sorts of things and so they looked to Jesus and they said, listen Jesus, some people they think you're John the Baptist, other people think that you're Elijah.

#### **6:44**

And then another one of the disciples chimes in and says, even better Jesus, some people think you're Jeremiah. Now if you don't have a background in the Old Testament or if you didn't

grow up in church, what you need to know is that those 3 people or those 2, Jeremiah and Elijah, they are 2 of the greatest prophets from the Old Testament. They are people who were given a word from God to go out into the world to speak not only to those in power, but also to those on the margins, to call account the people of God. And Jesus asked the disciples, who do people say that I am? And their answer is they think you are one of the great prophets, Jesus.

**7:27**

They think that you are one of the most fantastic people imaginable. Right? You got to remember that when Jesus is teaching and healing, one of the constant refrains from the crowds is that who is this man who teaches with authority, not like the scribes and the Pharisees. And so the word on the street is that Jesus is absolutely fantastic. Who do people say that I am?

**7:52**

It's an interesting question, isn't it? Who do people say that Jesus is? I got to be honest with you, I think no matter who you are or no matter where you are, you have an opinion about Jesus. Literally there have been 100 of 1000 of books that have been written addressing the question, who do people say that Jesus is? It was just a few months ago, it was Christmas time and I was watching one of those National Geographic specials, right?

**8:22**

You know those that come on at Easter and Christmas, they still talk about Jesus during those times. And they had someone on the National Geographic special talking about who is Jesus and this guy was a member of the Jesus seminar. Anybody familiar with the Jesus seminar? In the early 2000, there was a group of scholars, a group of university professors, a group of seminary professors, and they decided that they were gonna figure out who is Jesus, and so what they did is they got together and they got together and they started reading through the Bible, and they emerged from reading the Bible together, and here's what they did. They said using the best of the historical critical method, using the best of history and science, using the best of what we know about sociology and history, we're gonna be able to tell you

not what the Bible says, but who Jesus really is.

**9:17**

And it was fascinating you guys because they released this Bible. They were on the cover of Time Magazine. Do you remember when Time Magazine was still a thing and people read it? And they released this Bible and here's what they said, anything that was written in red, Jesus definitely said it. Anything that was written in pink, Jesus maybe said it.

**9:35**

Anything written in blue, Jesus probably did not say it. So any reference to resurrection, any reference to him being connected to God, and then if it's in black, Jesus absolutely did not say it. And you know what is fascinating to me? If you go and read the Jesus Seminar Bible, do you know what Jesus looks like? He looks like a 60 year old university professor.

**10:00**

We have this beautiful ability, don't we? Who is Jesus? And what we do is we tend to make Jesus look just like us. And typically, you guys, we fall in 1 of 2 camps. When we're asked the question, who do people say that Jesus is?

**10:17**

When we ask that question, we typically fall in 1 of 2 camps. And on the one side, you've got people like Thomas Jefferson. You guys know who Thomas Jefferson is, right? The the 3rd president of the United States, the founder of the University of Virginia, and the author of the Declaration of Independence, right? You guys know okay, good.

**10:34**

Glad we haven't forgotten US history yet. But what maybe you did not know is that Thomas Jefferson also was an ardent student of Jesus. He spent so much time immersing himself in the teachings of the New Testament. In fact, he did this so much that he eventually released the Jefferson Bible. Did you know that?

**10:58**

Did you know that Thomas Jefferson released the Bible? And if

you read the Jefferson Bible, here's what Thomas Jefferson did. He took the teachings of Jesus, the New Testament, and he applied it to the enlightenment values of historical science. And Jefferson emerged after studying Jesus and he said, Jesus is something that you need to know. Jesus is the greatest philosopher that the world has ever known.

#### 11:24

Jesus is greater than Socrates and Plato. Jesus is more admirable than Seneca. Here's what Thomas Jefferson said, that Jesus is the first of the human sages. Is He the Son of God? Absolutely not, but He is a wise man and we should listen to what He teaches us.

#### 11:45

Do you know how many people still square with this idea about Jesus? When you ask people, who do you say that Jesus is? I will regularly encounter people who will say, oh, his teaching is masterful, He teaches us to love our enemy and to pray for those that persecute us. He tells us to care about the immigrant and the widow and the orphan, and it's all so good, but oftentimes they'll stop short of saying he was God. It's interesting to ask the question, who do you say that Jesus is?

#### 12:18

What are other people saying about me, Jesus says? And if on the one hand we have folks like Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand we have folks that I encounter all the time who grew up in church, and you guys I don't know if I've told you this before, but I really don't like it when people find out I'm a pastor. I mean really, y'all, if I'm having a great conversation with someone, like the other day I was playing golf with a guy, and we are having the best time, and we're kicking back just enjoying ourselves, and then someone says, you know Will's the pastor at First Baptist Church, and the first thing the guy does and if this happens once, it happens a 1000 times, he says to me, well you know I don't go to church, I don't ask you that question dude. I don't go to church, but then he says this, but I believe in Jesus. I don't go to church, but I believe that Jesus died for my sins.

#### 13:13

See, if there's a school of thought that believes that Jesus was a great teacher, but nothing more, on the other hand, there's a school of thought that believes Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of God that died for the sins of the world and that he's nothing more than that. What I want you to see this morning is that both of those get something right, but they're missing a crucial element. What do people say about Jesus? For those that just say he was the Son of God that died for the sins of the world, but He has no impact on the day to day course of my life, I want to offer to you what Dallas Willard says, one of the greatest books that's ever been written, *The Divine Conspiracy*, in the chapter called *The Gospel of Sin Management*. Here's what Willard has to say.

**13:55**

The saying Jesus is Lord, saying Jesus died for my sins, it means very little in practice for anyone who has to hesitate before saying Jesus is smart. You see, there are a lot of people out there who is Jesus, and they'll say, he was the Son of God, but I actually don't think he was smart. He was the Son of God, but I actually don't believe what he said about how it's better to give than to receive. He's the Son of God who died for my sins, but I actually don't believe that I should turn the other cheek. He's the Son of God who died for my sins, but I don't actually believe that what he teaches for my life is true.

**14:35**

And what I want to remind you of this morning is that so many people who want to claim that Jesus is the Son of God who died for the sins of the world, yes He is, but He is also the smartest human being who has ever lived. He is also seated at the right hand of God the Father and he's ruling over all things right here, right now in the present moment. I could spend another 45 minutes or an hour just talking about this question, who do people say that Jesus is? It's a fascinating conversation. But here's the thing that I love about Jesus, that He understands it is important to see what other people are saying, but at the end of the day he turns his attention back to the disciples.

**15:18**

And they've been following Jesus long enough, right? For 3 years, they have been with Jesus and they understand that

following this rabbi from Nazareth, it's not a spectator sport. Do you understand that? Following Jesus, it's not a spectator sport, but at the end of the day, it is going to ask something of you. The disciples understood that and so they wouldn't have been surprised when Jesus said initially, what do other people say about me?

**15:45**

And they give their response and then he turns his attention back to them. And he looks at Peter and he says, That's great. He looks at John and James and the others and he says, That's great. But I got a better question: Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am?

**16:08**

You can imagine that it gets quiet with those 12 disciples because it's easy to say what everybody else is saying, but now Jesus is asking them to do the hard work of the soul. I said to you at the beginning of our time together that there are very few questions that can actually fundamentally shape the course of your life And what I want us to think through deeply this morning is that when Peter has turned his attention to Jesus and he has asked that question, something profound is happening. What I want us to understand is this, that who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am? It's the most important question that Peter and the other disciples were ever asked.

**16:51**

It's the most important question, dare I say, that any of us will ever be asked. Yeah, yeah, what do other people say about me? That's good. What do you say about me? I hope you understand that this is the living Word of God, and when we read these stories it isn't just about something that happened 1,000 of years ago, but that same question that Jesus asked to them is the question that Jesus asks to us today, who do you say that I am?

**17:26**

And in this story what I love is that Peter is the first one to speak up. Now if you don't know a whole lot about the New Testament, right, there are 12 disciples of Jesus, Peter's the one who always speaks up first. And if it makes you feel any better, he's also the



one that gets it wrong most often. And so, right, it's easy to talk about other people, but who do you say that I am? And after a brief moment of silence, right, Peter, okay, if none of you guys are gonna talk, I guess I'll do it.

**17:55**

Jesus, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Some of your translations might have put it differently, Jesus, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. The question that has the potential to change his life has been answered firmly and fully. And what I need us to understand this morning, if we want to truly appreciate who Jesus is, what he has done and is still doing, then we have to know what Peter means when he says you are the Christ. Because contrary to what some of us might think, Christ is not Jesus' last name, okay?

**18:37**

It's not his last name, but Christ is a title. Messiah is a title that is given to Jesus, and if you translate it literally from the Hebrew here's what Messiah means, Jesus, you are God's anointed. Jesus, you have been chosen by God to lead your people into a future. Jesus, you have been anointed by the creator of all things to lead humanity in a different direction that is filled with grace and truth and love. It is no simple answer when Peter looks to Jesus and he says, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

**19:25**

You guys have to remember that he issues this declaration long before Jesus goes to the cross and is resurrected on the 3rd day. And when we go back and we read the scriptures in light of the crucifixion and in light of the resurrection, asking the question, who is Jesus? What we find is an answer that will shape our lives. The book of Revelation says that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, he is the first and the last, he's the beginning and the end, he died and behold he is alive forevermore. Jesus himself in the gospel of John, what does he say, but who am I?

**20:07**

I'm the way, the truth, and the life. I'm the way, the truth, and the life, not just life when you go into eternity, but I am the way that

you can experience life and joy and hope right here and right now. You see, when we understand who Jesus is in the light of his crucifixion, when we understand who Jesus is in wake of the resurrection, we are asked the question and it shapes how we will answer. Who do you say that Jesus is? And when you go and you read Paul's letters over and over again, we hear the bold announcement that Jesus isn't just a great human, but Jesus is God.

**20:51**

Who do you say that Jesus is? And my prayer for you is that you would be able to answer alongside of Paul, who in his letter to the church at Colossae has this to say, that Jesus is the image of the God, that Jesus is the image of God, the invisible one. He's the firstborn over all of creation, and did you know this Paul says? Who is Jesus? He's the one who all things were created.

**21:19**

All things were created both through him and for him, who is Jesus? And Paul says loud and clear, Jesus is God, He is the greatest teacher who has ever lived, and we are called to root our lives around Him. But even more than that, He is the one who conquered death and invites us into life eternal. Friends, if you want to know what God looks like, the overwhelming witness of scripture is look at Jesus. There are very few questions in this life that can shape us.

**21:56**

There are very few questions in this life that can form us into different sorts of people. Who do you say that I am? Is in fact one of those questions. Let's be honest, some of us are here today, maybe all of us are here, and we fall into one of those 2 camps that I mentioned earlier. Some of us are here this morning and we like to think, Yeah, Jesus is a great teacher, Jesus gives us provocative things to think about and maybe engrain in the course of our lives, but the Son of God?

**22:31**

I don't know about that. And I want to remind you friends that we don't get to make our own determinations of who Jesus is, that if Jesus is who He says He is, I am the Lord of life, I am the

resurrection, I am the way, I am God, then we are forced to make a decision on this day. Who is Jesus? One of my other favorite authors is a guy named CS Lewis, and in his book Mere Christianity he lays out for us the case of answering the question, who is Jesus? And here's what he has to say, that you must make your choice, every single one of us, you must make your choice.

### **23:14**

Either Jesus, this man was and is the Son of God or else He's a madman or maybe something worse. To put it in a way that's come down to us through history, He is either liar, lunatic, or Lord, but every one of us will answer that question. Who do you say that I am? Some of us are here this morning, and you are more than ready to recognize that Jesus died for your sins, but you don't care about what he teaches about money. Some of us are here this morning and you readily acknowledge that he is the savior and the Son of God, but you won't listen to what he says about how we treat our neighbors.

### **24:05**

Who do you say that Jesus is? And my deepest prayer for you is that you would be able to just like Peter identify and proclaim that he is God's anointed, not only worth trusting with eternity but worth trusting with your life. It's not a question that was just asked then but it's a question that is asked even today. Who do you say that Jesus is? I live in a world that is filled with questions and one of the things that I am increasingly convinced of is that we waste so much time, we waste so much time asking questions that at the end of the day they don't matter.

### **25:02**

How much money do you make? It doesn't matter. What kind of job do I have? It doesn't matter. Where am I gonna go to college?

### **25:18**

At the end of the day it doesn't matter. There are very few questions in this life that have the ability to shape us and form us into different people and the most fundamental question that you could ever ask is this, who do you say that I am? And what I want you to know today is that if Paul is right and we know that he is that one day we will answer. One day he says in his letter to the

church at Philippi, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. What we have to come to grips with now is that simple question, who do you say that Jesus is?

### **26:10**

Friends, may you answer that question well. Join me now and let's pray together. God, thank you for this morning. Thank you for your goodness that we've experienced today. Lord, every single one of us has to answer this question, who do we say that Jesus is?

### **26:31**

Some of us are here this morning and, Lord, we shout from the rooftops that you died for our sins, but you don't shape our lives. So, Lord, work in our hearts today. Some of us are here today, oh God, and we love the teaching of Jesus, but we struggle with the revolution of resurrection that He launches in the world, God, work on our hearts today. Help us, like Peter, to know the truth that you are God's anointed. God may we be faithful to you, may we follow and serve Jesus walking with him all the way, answering the question that shapes our lives.

### **27:13**

Lord, who do we say that you are? May we be honest with you in this moment, may we answer the call that you are God's anointed. Continue to be with us as we worship. This is our prayer and we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

### **27:28**

Amen.