

02/11/18 @ BUCYRUS UMC

TITLE: WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

TEXT: LUKE 9: 18-20

SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 3:11-15

I – IDENTITY CRISIS:

I need help! I used to think that I was a very stable person, but now I'm not so sure. I used to think that I had it going on – that I knew who I was, where I had been, where I was going, and what I wanted to accomplish in life. Now I'm not so sure. In thinking about this message I've come to believe that I may be having an identity crisis.

I took a day and listened to all the names I was called on that particular day. On the way out the door for work that morning Julie said goodbye and called me "honey." As I stopped for coffee the cashier called me "sir." During the day I saw friends who called me "Mike" and parishioners who called me "Pastor." I talked to my son to my daughter on the phone and they called me "dad." That afternoon I was in downtown Bucyrus to conduct some business and had numerous people call me "Chief," and then someone else there told me it was nice to see an old "Friend." On the way home I had the occasion to pass someone I thought was driving a little slow and their lip movements led me to believe I was being referred to with a name that wasn't on my birth certificate. To top it all off, as if I wasn't thoroughly confused yet, I walked in the door at River Valley High School that night and had a little person call me "Grandpa". I was confused!

You'll be happy to know that I have since come to the realization that no matter how many names I have, I'm not related to Cybil and don't have numerous people living in me. There is only one person that each of those others met that day, but each of them sees me in a different role. The name they had for me was dependent on the role I played or am playing in their life. Most of you have this same dilemma. One person – many names.

II – GOD’S IDENTITY:

We see this same issue as we read the story of interaction between God and Moses in Exodus and elsewhere. Moses knew about God. As a member of Pharaoh’s household he had learned the truth, that he was Hebrew. I imagine that when he went out visiting his people the Israelites as the Bible tells us in Exodus 2, he heard the stories of “Jehovah-Elohim - God the Creator” making the world and the people. He heard the stories of “Jehovah-Jireh – The Lord our Provider” who sent the people to Egypt for food during the famine at the time of Jacob. Stories of “El-Shaddai – The God who is sufficient for the needs of his people” who watched over the people now as they were in slavery, as well as “El-Olam – The Everlasting Lord” who would not forget them and who they cried out to for deliverance. This God had many roles and many names.

This is the God Moses was sitting around thinking about when he saw and approached the burning bush on Mt. Sinai. This is the God who called to him from the bush and told him to remove his sandals because he was on Holy ground. This is the God who said he had heard the cries of his people in Egypt and would now use Moses to deliver them, and this is the God who refuted each and every one of Moses’ excuses why he could not be the deliverer.

But Moses had one more question, one more problem to solve before he would give in and do God’s bidding. He wanted God to clarify who God was. He had heard all the names, he had thought about all the roles God had attributed to him by his people, and Moses didn’t want to have to give Pharaoh a long list and confuse him. He asks God “who should I say sent me, which God is speaking? God tells him to say, “I AM” sent you. No matter what I do I am God and will always be God. All they need to know is God sent you. Many roles, many functions, but just one God.

III – TEXT:

As we look at the life of Jesus we see the same question coming up... who is He? He was the only Son of God, but he was many things to many people. He fulfilled various roles in the lives of people and there was some question as to who people thought he was during his ministry. That's the question we see Jesus himself asking his disciples in this passage from Luke...

Luke 9:18 - 20 (NLT)

¹⁸ One day Jesus left the crowds to pray alone. Only his disciples were with him, and he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" ¹⁹ "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other ancient prophets risen from the dead." ²⁰ Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

Peter replied, "You are the Messiah sent from God!"

By the time we get to this passage in Luke, Jesus has fulfilled many roles. So far in his earthly ministry he has chosen the twelve disciples, he has healed various people of their diseases and driven demons out of others. He has preached to the masses and taken the religious leaders of the time to task for the things they were doing and teaching to the people. He had reached out in compassion to a widow and raised her son from the dead. He had stood in the bow of a boat on an angry sea and calmed the storm, which had come upon them, and the disciples saw his power as he commanded even the wind and the water. He has just finished performing the miracle of feeding the 5,000 people with only 5 loaves of bread and two fishes and had leftovers.

On this day we find that Jesus is praying and staying connected with God. He finishes his prayers and walks over to the disciples and puts a question to them... "WHO DO THE PEOPLE SAY I AM?" What he's really doing is seeing what the crowd's level of understanding is. They've been waiting for a Messiah as promised by the prophets and he wants to know

if they have recognized him as that promised Messiah. After seeing all the miracles he's performed thus far, after listening to his messages of forgiveness and Salvation, of the coming Kingdom of God, do they know who he is? The disciples tell him that no, evidently they don't. Some believe he's John the Baptist, or Elijah or one of the other ancient prophets of old come back from the dead.

Then Jesus makes it personal. He turns from wondering what the crowds say about him to what the disciples say about him. What do these 12 followers have to say? Those who have been up close and personal during his days of ministry, who have witnessed all the miracles for themselves, who have shared his thoughts and his words of wisdom. He wants to know "WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?"

As in other places we see that Peter is the spokesman for the 12. He's not afraid to speak up and give his opinion, right or wrong. He's been both praised and chastised by Jesus for things he's said, but this time he gets it very right. He looks at Jesus and he says, "YOU ARE THE MESSIAH SENT FROM GOD." Peter recognized Jesus for who he is, the one they've all been waiting for. Peter and the disciples have moved to a higher understanding of this teacher who called them to give up everything and follow him.

IV – WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?:

Jesus has had many roles to many people. He was the Son of God, part of the Trinity. He was the son of Mary and Joseph and a brother to his earthly brothers and sisters, and now a brother to all those who have recognized him as the Messiah. While on earth he was a teacher, a preacher, and a leader. We read that he was a close friend to some like Lazarus, Mary and Martha. He was a healer to those who were sick and diseased. We call him the Prince of Peace, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. He has so many names we can't list them all here today. One source I checked for this sermon listed 603 names for God and his Son in our Bible. I can see how people can look at Jesus and see someone different than the person next to them.

The question Jesus asked his disciples 2,000 years ago is a question he has asked everyone since. “WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?” Each and every one of us must still grapple with and answer this question for ourselves. The answer you have for this question indicates whether you are just a part of the crowd or one of the disciples.

It's when you answer this question with certainty that you move into the deep and rewarding relationship Jesus wants to have with you. It's when you discover who this Jesus really is that you receive all the love that comes with it. Finding the true Jesus is finding forgiveness, peace, calmness, understanding, and most importantly...Salvation. It's when you answer this question that you can sing songs like the one we sang this morning – “DAYS OF ELIJAH” and look forward to the Jesus in the song. Look forward to his riding on the clouds as he comes back to claim those who know his name. Knowing who Jesus is allows you to sing such words in a state of jubilee, not anxiety. Can you sing them yet?

V – WHO DO YOU SAY HE IS?

The question today is “WHO DO YOU SAY HE IS?” When you think of Jesus, who is he to you? Does he hold some significance in life or is he just a character in a book we call the Bible? Do you have a clear definition of who he is; do you know him by one of his titles? Do you know him up close and personal or do you know him at a distance?

This coming Wednesday night is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of lent when we remember what Jesus came and did for us. It’s a season of sacrifice that concludes with a lifetime of celebration if you can answer the question correctly. Starting Wednesday night we will explore the name of Jesus and help answer these questions.

In the Gospel of John we find Jesus used the same words as his Father to describe whom he was when asked. He told people “I AM” and put various descriptions with it. We will look at some of these over the course of lent and see what answers you find. It’s my hope and prayer you will find the answer and relationship with Jesus you’re searching for.

AMEN