

The Most Important Question You Will Ever Have to Answer Luke 9:18-20

At certain times in our lives questions arise that send us in unexpected directions. Some of these questions might include: Where are you going to college? Will you marry me? Would you be willing to move across the country for your job? While these questions fill us with anxiety, fear, excitement, etc., there is still one important question from God waiting for every Christian to answer: “Who do **you** say that **I am**?” As a Christian, this is ***THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION YOU WILL EVER HAVE TO ANSWER!*** What makes this question important is that the answer reveals where you have placed God in your list of priorities. It is also the question you will need to answer on the day you meet Christ face to face. Another way of asking this question is, “how will I explain to Christ where I placed him in my priorities?” The follow up question will then be, “Will Christ be pleased with how my lifestyle reflected his?” This is a question that all Christians, at one point, took (and still should take) very seriously.

Last week we listened to how the early Christians answer was that Jesus was their one and only Lord and they were willing to sacrifice their lives. New church starts today answer by focusing on teaching that there is only one God and God is top on list of priorities. When this congregation began in 1856 its mission was to bring souls to Christ. According to Anna

Sneller's history book, the first circuit rider came to Denison in 1856 appearing once a month to teach and preach the original seven faithful followers. Anna also shares that it wasn't until ten years later that the first Methodist church building was constructed and yet the word of Christ continued to spread and the kingdom of God grew. As the church grew so did the members faith and trust in God. In those first ten years, they relied on God and their community while the clergy traveled the circuit. Faith and trust in God kept God's people grounded as the new community around them changed into a field of opportunity to grow God's kingdom. They committed themselves to bible studies to get to know Jesus. They vowed to invite others to join them as they studied God's word and were fed by God's message. What does commitment and faith look like in the church today?

Mainline churches are struggling today because there seems to be a lack of commitment to God. For me, the issue is an understanding of what it means to be truly committed to God. A true committed Christian searches for a community of believers to help him/her study and interpret God's scriptures so he/she can answer who Jesus is to him/her. Christians understand that to follow Christ they must first know Christ and what Christ did for and in the world. Worship is only one aspect of discovering Christ.

The real depth of understanding comes from the commitment of studying God's scriptures and being the hands of God in the community and world like Jesus. As Christians, our responsibility is to share with our neighbors that we, the church, have walked in their shoes as new believers and are here to help them grow their faith. This is why Christians have a personal relationship with Christ but it isn't private.

The role of the church is to be the informed people of Christ for the world. This doesn't mean we have all the answers or are perfectly divine because we believe God is the one and only Lord. The Gospels tell the story of Jesus and how Jesus used common ordinary people to share his message. Rev. Slaughter writes, "throughout the Gospels he chose to reveal his divinity through people gathered together in community. In doing so, Jesus showed that he can do more through our limitations within community than we can ever hope to accomplish using our own strength. We see our limitations; Christ reveals our possibilities." Therefore, the task of a Christian is to share our personal experiences of when we needed hope, strength, and encouragement from God's Holy Spirit. What was it like to have God walk with you in your most difficult times and most exciting times? This is a conversation that happens when Christians gather together for spiritual feeding from bible studies and mission work. God's

best work is done in conversation. Jesus said, where two or three are gathered I am there among you. Who are you in conversation with to help you answer this important question?

As we look at how Jesus led the Disciples, we discover that after Jesus taught the crowds with sermons, he gathered his Disciples for further teaching. Jesus held private classroom discussions where they could ask question and find answers. It was in this environment where the Disciples love and commitment to Christ grew. They were able to ask questions, get clarification, and discover what they personally could do to help Jesus gather crowds to hear about God. The Disciples discovered who Jesus really was, God with them, as they shared their personal experiences with the small group. Even though we do not have Jesus to pull us aside today, we still have the ability to gather in small groups to study God's scriptures to learn who Jesus is for you and the world today.

The question, "Who do you say that I am?" is answered differently by everyone because it is answered with how God has helped you in your journey here on earth. This question also asks what have we told others that we believe Christ is? It's a two part question: How do you know me? What have you told others about me? If you struggle to answer either of these questions, this Lenten journey is a good place to start asking

yourself, “how have I truly committed my life to God?” Have I made the commitment to learn all I can about who Jesus was and who Jesus is today? Rev. Slaughter writes, “Responding effectively to that question requires a whole life commitment. It means acknowledging and fully embracing what Jesus was as a man and who he is as divine God. Jesus is the best picture I could ever imagine of a God I want to follow.” What does your God look like? How have you helped others get to know your God?

The answers to these questions are not a simple. We know that Jesus is God in the world, but Jesus is no longer physically here to tell us what we are to do next. However, Jesus, the Divine, lives and breathes in each of you that sits here this morning. Can you feel Christ alive in you? When I teach about Jesus and the word of God, I am filled with excitement that God is opening the eyes of others to know God better. In the grand spectrum of theology, the study of God, I know very little but I’m excited to learn more and share it with you. For me, as clergy, it’s like taking a menu that has everything on it and saying, “what can I get for you today?” My leadership is offering you the words and food from God you need to answer this important question. As we recite the Apostle’s Creed and you read the words of I believe....., do you understand them? Do you share them with others? The message from God this Lenten season may not be where do I

go serve, but rather, “Teach me Lord.” Being a Christian is more than worship. It’s answering the questions of “How will I explain to Jesus where I put him in my earthly list of priorities and will Jesus be pleased with me?” Jesus is waiting for your answer. How can I help you find your answer to the most important question you will ever have to answer? Who do you say Jesus is? Amen.