

What Christians Do
Tell Others – Matthew 16

Do you remember back in school when it was test time? Do you remember ever having to take a major test, something really important? Those were the worst, right? This is supposedly a true story I read online. It happened at Ohio State University a few years ago in a huge lecture hall with over a thousand students all taking a calculus final exam. Apparently, this particular calculus teacher wasn't very well liked. He was one of those guys who would stand at the front of the class and yell out how much time was remaining before the end of a test, a real charmer. Since he was so busy gallivanting around the room making sure that nobody cheated and that everyone was aware of how much time they had left before their failure on the test was complete, he had the students stack the completed tests on the huge podium at the front of the room. This made for quite a mess, remember there were 1000 students in the class.

During this particular final, one guy entered the test needing a decent grade to pass the class. His only problem with Calculus was that he did poorly when rushed, and this guy standing in the front of the room barking out how much time was left before the tests had to be handed in didn't help him at all. He figured he wanted to assure himself of a good grade, so he hardly flinched when the professor said, "pencils down and submit your scantron sheets and work to piles at the front of the room". Five minutes turned into ten, ten into twenty, twenty into forty...almost an hour after the test was "officially over", our friend finally put down his pencil, gathered up his work, and headed to the front of the hall to submit his final. The whole time, the professor sat at the front of the room, strangely waiting for the student to complete his exam.

"What do you think you're doing?" the professor asked as the student stood in front of him about to put down his exam on one of the neatly stacked piles of exams (the professor had plenty of time to stack the mountain of papers while he waited) It was clear that the professor had waited only to give the student a hard time.

"Turning in my exam," retorted the student confidently. "I'm afraid I have some bad news for you," the professor gloated, "Your exam is an hour late. You've failed it and, consequently, I'll see you next term when you repeat my course." The student smiled slyly and asked the professor "Do you know who I am?"

"What?" replied the professor gruffly, annoyed that the student showed no sign of emotion. The student rephrased the question mockingly, "Do you know what my name is?" "No", snarled the professor.

The student looked the professor dead in the eyes and said slowly, "I didn't think so", as he lifted up one of the stacks halfway, shoved his test neatly into the center of the stack, let the stack fall burying his test in the middle, turned around, and walked casually out of the huge lecture hall. (sermonillustrations.com)

A calculus final exam is the thing of nightmares if you ask me. But sometimes we have to take tests. Sometimes it is for our good that we are tested. And there is one test we will all have to take. We will read about this test in **Matthew chapter 16** this morning. The ones being tested in this passage are the twelve disciples of Jesus. Jesus is the Teacher and he gives them the most important test of their lives.

Turn to **Matthew chapter 16** and let's read **verses 13-17**. Here we see that, after about two and a half years of ministry, Jesus has taken His disciples as far north as He could and still stay in Israel. We don't know exactly why they walked up there but it was a long way from Jerusalem. And maybe that was the point. Maybe He wanted to get away from the crowds and the Pharisees and all the hoopla and go up north where it was a little cooler and just have some down time.

But in this down time, Jesus asked them a couple of questions. The first question was a pretty easy, multiple-choice kind of question. The next one was vital. Let's read it in **Matthew 16:13-17**.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."

Can you imagine being one of those disciples? Jesus asks the group a question and probably several responded. Then Jesus asks the next question; the most important question and I can imagine there was a moment of silence and then Peter opens his mouth and starts to talk. Don't you know all the other disciples went, *"Oh no! Not Pete. What's he gonna say? This could be bad."* Right? Peter has a reputation for saying dumb stuff and putting his foot in his mouth and it usually happens at very important times. So, you can imagine their concern when he answered Jesus. But this time...Pete nails it.

Let's start back at the beginning to see just how good this answer is. Jesus uses the term, "Son of Man" to describe Himself. It was His favorite term to use. He used it many times and it originally comes from the book of **Daniel, chapter 7**, where it says that God *"gave to the one like a Son of Man dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."* That reference would not be lost on any half-way serious law-abiding Jew. It was a thinly veiled Messianic title and Jesus used it often, speaking of Himself.

When the disciples were asked who people thought He was, they gave good and reasonable responses. They were good and reasonable for unbelievers. The first response was **John the Baptist**. In **Matthew 14**, Herod seems to be quite convinced Jesus was the risen John. After having John killed, I guess Herod was having a little bit of guilt.

Others believed He was the reincarnated **Elijah** and that's a pretty good guess. Elijah was considered by most Jews to be the supreme Old Testament prophet and in **Malachi 4**, God says He will send Elijah before the coming of the great and terrible coming of the day of the Lord, which is the Second Coming of Jesus. Some Jews even today set a place at the table during their Passover celebrations for the prophet Elijah.

Still others said that Jesus was **Jeremiah**, another of their most revered prophets. There is an old rabbi's tale of Jeremiah taking the Ark of the Covenant and hiding it in a cave somewhere and some Jews thought that the prophet would bring those back before the Messiah came.

So, obviously Jesus was highly thought of. Most people believed Him to be a great man and a great teacher and even a great prophet. Now, for most of us, that would be a great compliment. But Jesus did not accept those compliments. And He still doesn't today. I heard a popular Jewish radio host the other day give his opinion about Jesus. He didn't think poorly of Jesus, necessarily. He just knew He was just another man. He said Jesus never did any miracles and that He was just another Jew who got killed trying to rebel from Rome. No big deal in the scheme of things.

When I heard that, it felt so hurtful to me. What a shame! But honestly, unless you answer just like Peter did, it doesn't matter what you think of Him. It doesn't matter if you think He was a lunatic or a liar. If you don't know Him as Lord, you have failed the test.

But Peter...Peter KNEW Jesus. He had a relationship with Him and He, like usual, wasn't shy about saying what he believed. And Peter knew from the life of Jesus and the words of Jesus and the prophecy regarding Jesus that Jesus was the Messiah. He is God and the Son of God and is the Anointed One. He is Prophet and Priest and King. He is the Savior, the Christ, the perfect Sacrifice and the only way to Heaven is through Him.

Where they were in Caesarea Philippi, they were probably surrounded by false idols and man-made gods. They were big into the worship of Pan and several other little-g gods as well as Caesar and so it was very appropriate that Peter didn't stop with his proclamation of Jesus being the Christ. He said, Jesus, you are the Son of the LIVING God. The Son of Man was also the Son of the living God.

Now, at this point, as evidenced by numerous things the twelve did and said later, they didn't have a full comprehension of the Trinity or even everything Jesus was or did but they knew enough. Peter knew enough, that's for sure. And do you see what Peter did when asked? He said it. He spoke it. He verbalized it. Jesus is God. Jesus is the Messiah. And Peter knew this because his whole life had been changed by Jesus. Peter used to be a fisherman. But one day, Jesus walked past him and his brother Andrew as they were casting their net into the lake and Jesus hardly broke stride but said, *"Hey, y'all come follow me."* And they followed and never went back.

Since then, Peter had seen miracles and heard teaching and learned things from Jesus he had never before comprehended and so when Jesus asked him who he thought Jesus was, Peter couldn't help but speak the truth he knew. Peter didn't know everything but he knew enough to tell somebody else enough and that was blessed by God and used by God.

It wasn't too long after this that Jesus was crucified. He died and was raised again and went to Heaven to prepare a place for us all but He left the disciples here on earth and He left them with one main command. Go and make disciples. As you go, make disciples. As you go to the store, to school, to work, to the ballgame, make more disciples of Jesus. And do you know what happened? The disciples did just that. Especially Peter.

Peter, just a few months later, stood up in front of thousands of people, some of whom wanted to put him in jail or even kill him and he just said what he knew. He said basically the same thing he told Jesus. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the One. Jesus is God and is the Savior and is the only way to Heaven. Same guy. Same story. Still blessed by God. And three thousand people came to faith in Jesus because of what this redneck fisherman testified to. That was Acts chapter 2. In Acts chapter 3, Peter says the same thing and they threw him into prison. (When was the last time you got thrown into prison for testifying about Jesus?) Then in chapter 4, Peter was taken before the authorities and I bet you can't guess what he told them. He said, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."* Then it says, *"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."*

Yes, they had been with Jesus and that is why Jesus asked them the question that He did a few months before. He wanted them to say it. He wanted His disciples to say the words. You can't just live a good life. Yes, that is a big part of it and without that good, godly life, your testimony is useless. But at some point, you have to say the words. You have to be ready in season and out of season to preach the Word as Paul told Timothy. (2 Tim. 4)

A month or two ago, we went through a sermon series on how to prove to ourselves that we truly are believers and followers of Jesus. And since none of you that I know of made any new professions of faith, I have to assume that you all passed those tests. So, then we started in this series of what Christians do. We saw that we are to be ready for the Rapture to happen at any time. I preached that one first because I wasn't sure I would need to preach the others since I am expecting His return at any minute.

But the next one was we need to gather together. Church doesn't save you but it is what saved people do. We meet together every Sunday. The next message was to do good because we know that our good works will reap a harvest if we don't give up. And you know, I could preach a hundred more messages on what we as Christians are supposed to do but this is the end of the series and it may be the most important thing we do. We have to tell others. We have to say the words. You don't have to know everything. And you don't have to answer every question anybody asks and you don't have to take up for God in every crazy person's Facebook post. But the time is getting short. One way or another, time is short and we must be about our Father's business with a sense of urgency.

Okay, here's the scenario. You are driving in your car in some other state. You don't know your way around and your phone is dead and you have no GPS and you are hopelessly lost. You think about stopping to ask for help but this looks like a really bad part of town and you don't know if it's safe to stop. So, you just keep driving...and driving...and driving. It's getting late. You're tired. You're confused and then – all of the sudden – you see a sign. As you get closer, you read it and it says, "Texas -this way – 10 miles". Now, do you care what color that sign is? Do you care what font it is written in? Do you care that the sign is old and kinda hard to read? No! You just need to know which way to go.

My dear family, this world is screaming for answers. They are lost and tired and it's getting late. They don't care that you don't have all the answers. They want to know the truth. Now, they may accept it or reject it. That's between them and God but you have the answer. You are the sign. Point the way. Point the way to Jesus by telling them what He has done in your life. Tell them who He is and what He has done. Tell them the way to go. They may believe you and they might not. They may think you are crazy or stupid. Who cares?

Twice this week I have read the same basic statistic. In one study it said that 98% of Christians go their whole life without ever telling another soul about Jesus. The other study in a completely different place said the same basic thing. Only 2% of people ever share their faith with anybody else. You literally have one job in this life now that you are a Christian. Jesus didn't say to go into all the nations and make some money. He didn't say that as you go, make some good friends. The one thing Jesus told us to do in the Great Commission was to go tell others. Make disciples. And He will be with you as you do it even to the very end of the age. (Matt. 28)

My friends, this is the end of the age. Jesus is with you. The Holy Spirit is living inside of you. The Father is watching and protecting you. You have a testimony. Now, go tell it. As you go, tell it to the lady at Walmart. Tell it to the neighbor next door. For Pete's sake, tell your kids and grandkids. If you don't, who will?

If you don't have a testimony, we need to change that right now. Let this be the first day of your testimony. Let this be the day you ask God to forgive you of all your many sins and tell Him that you now repent or turn away from those sins and that lifestyle. Ask Him to come into your life and change you from the inside out and make you more like Him. Do it right now as the music plays.⁶