

Who Do You Say I Am?

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[0 : 0 0] reading is from Luke chapter 9, starting at verse 1. That's on page 1038 in the Church Bibles. That's page 1038, Luke chapter 9, starting at verse 1.

When Jesus had called the twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal those who were ill. He told them, take nothing for the journey, no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.

So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere. Now Herod the Tetrarch heard about all that was going on, and he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. But Herod said, I beheaded John. Who then is this I hear such things about? And he tried to see him.

When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him, and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida. But the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing. Late in the afternoon, the twelve came to him and said, send the crowds away so they can go to the countryside and find food and lodgings, because we are in a remote place here. He replied, you give them something to eat. They answered, we have only five loaves of bread and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all this crowd. About 5,000 men were there. He said to his disciples, make them sit down in groups of about 50 each. The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. Once, when Jesus was praying in private, and his disciples were with him, he asked them, who do the crowds say I am? They replied, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life. But what about you, he asked, who do you say I am? Peter answered, God's Messiah. This is the word of God.

Good evening. Lovely to see you all this evening. Welcome to St. Silas 2019 in the evening. And in the first Sunday of each month, we're doing a little experiment at St. Silas, not experiment, a service called Tri-Church. And Tri-Church is a great opportunity to invite your friends who might not have been to church before, who might have stopped going to church for a while, to help them to Tri-Church.

[3 : 5 3] And what we'll be doing is we'll be looking at the Gospel of Luke on the first Sunday of each month in the evenings. And we start off in this passage in 9.1 to 20. So, and we'll have a regular series other times. Let me pray for us as we start now. So, Father, we thank you for this passage. We thank you for your word. We thank you for the opportunity to Tri-Church, to be at church. We pray that we'll commit this time and this year to loving you and knowing you better. In Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

Amen. Okay. Well, I've been in Glasgow a little over six months now, and there's still some questions that I have about Glasgow. Some of the more obvious ones I've sorted out. So, Mulngavi is no longer Mulngavi. That's Mulgai. The rain does stop in Glasgow occasionally, and the sun does shine occasionally. And there's some other questions that I have in Glasgow. So, I live at the bottom of Mary Hill Road. Does anyone know Mary Hill Road here? Roughly? Yes, vaguely. At the bottom end, there's a string of barbershops. And there's this one barbershop.

It's kind of a Jamaican barbershop. And it's always packed. All the other barbershops are empty, but this one is absolutely packed. Christmas Eve, packed. New Year's Eve, 7 o'clock, packed.

Everyone. Children, mothers with their children, white, Asian, Afro, Caribbean. Everyone is there. Scottish, South African even. Everyone is there. How do they do it? I don't know. There's other sillier questions like that we might have had growing up. So, if Spider-Man, if Superman's so smart, why does he wear his underpants over his pants? And when you break something down and you reassemble it, where did all those little nuts and bolts come from that you left over with? Where have they come from?

But then there's also more serious questions that we have in life, aren't there? And we've considered some of those questions in that little video, Life Explored. For instance, who am I? Who am I going to marry? What should I be doing with my life? And those are kind of like the big varsity questions, aren't they? And it's one of these questions that we have in this reading tonight that really drives this reading. And it's that question that we find in verse 9 where Herod says, who then is this? And he's speaking about Jesus then. And so he is asking, who then is Jesus? And maybe that's the question that you have come with him. Who is Jesus? And what am I to make of him in 2019? So that Jesus was a real historical figure who did amazing things. That's beyond dispute. If we don't believe that, then we'll have to have to not believe in figures like Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great and many other figures in history. But who is Jesus? And what am I to make of the claims that he made about himself? So here's one. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father that is God but through me.

[7 : 38] Try saying that in the office tomorrow or in your class on campus when you go to class. Imagine the looks he'll get. So to some of us, Jesus is simply irrelevant, boring. To others, maybe he was an enlightened person, a good moral leader, a good teacher, a good example. And then to some of us, he is the third member of the Trinity. God come down in human flesh. But who then is Jesus?

And this is the question that Luke wants us to consider in this passage tonight. So who then is Jesus? And if you're taking notes, we're looking at verses 1 to 9 there. And we've noticed that it comes up in verse 9 where Herod has said, who then is this? And I'll just read that for us. But Herod said, I beheaded John, who then is this? I hear such things about. And he tried to see him. And what are the things that Herod had been hearing about Jesus? Well, it's all the works that Jesus has been doing and that he has sent his disciples to do in verse 2 and verse 6 of our passage. So verse 2, and he, that is Jesus, sent them out, that's the disciples, to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal those who were ill. And then in verse 6, so they, that is their disciples, set out and they went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere. And notice that this question of who Jesus is, that these works and this news prompts

Herod to ask, raises up mixed responses in people. People respond to this question differently. So earlier in Luke's account, people have seen the miracles that Jesus have done. And what do they say about Jesus? They say he's a great prophet. God come to help his people. At another time, demon, Jesus exercises demons out of a man. And what do the demons call Jesus? Can you remember? Jesus, son of the most high God. But what we also notice in Luke's gospel, perhaps more ominously and more darkly, is that some people are also reluctant to acknowledge the signs and the words that they hear about Jesus. People are described as being fearful of him, asking him to leave, to stay away from them.

They're being described as lacking faith in Jesus. And it's this reluctance that we see in the confusion of the crowd in this opening section of Luke. So look at verse 7.

And 8. I'll just read that. And he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead. Others, that's others of the crowd, that Elijah had appeared. And still others that one of the prophets from long ago had come back to life. And we see this reluctance and this ambivalence to see who Jesus is clearly in the warning that Jesus gives to his disciples in verse 5. So I'll just read that for us. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust of your feet as a testimony against them. See, the warning is that it's possible for us to see and believe in all the miracles that Jesus does, to see all their evidence, to accept it, to hear the good news of Jesus. To come to church regularly, to say our prayers and amen and do all the works of religion, nodding along, but ultimately to reject Jesus. How might we reject Jesus? Well, I'll give you a couple of common expressions that people might use to reject Jesus. So one is, I like to think of Jesus as a good moral teacher. Or I like to think of Jesus as an example of how to live my life. I like to think of Jesus as someone who reached perfection and enlightenment. But I cannot accept that Jesus was the Son of God.

[12 : 20] God. Or we may say things like, we have all been saved. God accepts everyone. Why do I need to accept Jesus? Or I go to church every Sunday. I'm on the membership roll. I'm a member at St. Silas. Or we might say things like, I'm a goodish person. I give to charity. I help out. I'm a nice guy. Come on. I'm just nice. I have my friends over for dinner. But then we go on to say, I don't need to repent. And I don't think Jesus died for my sins. So who then is this? And to answer this question that Herod asks, that the crowds debate, Luke tells us the account of the miraculous feeding of the 5,000. And this is a miraculous work that points to Jesus as one who feeds his people. Looking at verses 10 to 17, if you're taking notes there. So the account opens up with the apostles returning in verse 10. And what do they do? They reported to Jesus what they had done. And what is it they'd been doing? Namely, healing the sick and proclaiming good news of the kingdom of God. And having received these reports from the apostles,

Jesus then withdraws with them to the village of Bethesda. But no sooner does Jesus withdraw with them to the village of Bethesda, then what happens? The crowds flock to follow him. And the day goes on.

And late in the afternoon, a problem arises. So just join with me looking down at verse 12. And we'll pick up the action as we read. Late in the afternoon, the 12th, that's the disciples, the apostles, came to Jesus. And they said, send the crowd away so that we can go to the surrounding villages and find food and lodging because we're in a remote place here. And you can imagine the scene. I'll just paint the scene for you. Bethesda, it's built of this black asphalt rock that's super hot in the summer. It's a lonely place on this hillside, miles from anywhere. It's super hot.

It's getting really hot and it's remote. And there's crowds of people there. It's busier than Buchanan galleries on Christmas Eve. There's dogs, there's donkeys, there's cats, all hungry, tired, and thirsty, longing for something to satisfy them and a place to sleep. And what the disciples suggest, what they suggest to Jesus is entirely sensible. So, Lord, it's late. We're tired and hungry and thirsty. Send the crowds away so that we can get some downtime from all this proclaiming of the gospel and healing people. Let us get some rest. We're miles from anywhere here.

Send them to Tiberias. That's a big town. It's just down the road. Send them there. But what does Jesus say? You give them something to eat. What did he say? You give them something to eat?

[15 : 42] Are you sure, Jesus? Look where we are. We don't have money. It will cost a fortune. I've still got my student loan to pay off. Lord, we've only got five loaves and bread. Unless we go and buy food.

For all this crowd. Not that that's very likely. Have you seen the size of this crowd? 5,000 men? That's not to count all the women and all the children and all the dogs and all the pets and all the cats and everyone else. And what does Jesus say? Have them sit down in groups of about 50 each.

And then the most remarkable thing happens. So looking at verse 16. Taking up the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them.

And then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. Now as remarkable as this miracle seems, as this account seems, it's not all too unexpected when we consider who Luke wants us to understand who Jesus is from Jesus's works and words.

So who then is this? Who then is Jesus? Well, a couple of observations. So Jesus is the one who, from this account, the God, the Father, hears and listens to.

[17 : 23] Look what he says. Taking up the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, where God is, he gave thanks. You see, a little later in this chapter, about a couple of verses later, we have God saying of Jesus, this is my son whom I have chosen.

God the Father listens to Jesus because Jesus is God's son. Next, Jesus is the one who is always thankful and gives thanks.

Next, Jesus is the one who provides in abundance, miraculously. Next, what do we read? The disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

There's no skimping with Jesus, no miserly, no wee drams or anything like that with Jesus. Jesus is the one who partners with his followers to feed others.

And it's astounding, isn't it? Look what he says. Then he gave them to the disciples. He's partnering with the disciples to distribute to the people. What an amazing passage that God uses people to accomplish his purposes.

[18 : 47] And then finally, what do we notice? Jesus is the one who feeds and rescues the people of God and feeds the hungry, just as Moses fed and rescued the people of God when God brought them up out of Egypt, just as God promised and said he would.

But having shown who Jesus is through this account of this great miraculous work, this feeding of the 5,000, Luke then goes on to show us Jesus in the miraculous word in the verses 18 to 20, that Jesus is God's king or Messiah.

So if you're taking notes there, Jesus is the one who is God's king forever, verses 18 to 20. And from the crowds and the spectacle, we move to a more intimate scene in those verses.

So verse 18, once when Jesus was praying in private, his disciples were with him and he asked them, who do the crowds say I am?

And again, Luke repeats the confusion and reluctance to acknowledge Jesus' identity that pervades the crowds that we saw in verse 7 and 8.

[20 : 11] So verse 19 we read, they replied, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others say one of the prophets of long ago that came back to life. But again comes the question, but what about you?

Who do you say I am? How would you answer that this evening? How have you answered that in your life up until this point?

What do you think about Jesus? Who do you say Jesus is? And what you say and how you live and how you treat others?

And what we see miraculously Peter answers, he says, God's Messiah. Messiah. Well, what's Peter saying about Jesus here?

See, Messiah is a bit of a, it's a funny daddy Bible word. And the Messiah is one who is expected to come and reign over God's people as king forever.

[21 : 20] The Messiah was the one who would fulfill all of God's great promises to humanity. He would prophetically fulfill as a prophet all those promises.

The Messiah was the one who would bring salvation and rescue his people from their sins as a priest. The Messiah is God's perfect prophet, priest, and king.

The Messiah is a bit like an iPhone. Well, what do I mean by that? If you're slightly older here, you might remember when the first iPhone came out, we had Steve Jobs come up and he made this big spiel about the iPhone.

It's a phone. It's an internet device. It is an music playing device. It's a phone. It's an internet device. It's a music playing device.

It's a three in one. The Messiah is God's prophet, priest, and king. Here's the God's final word to all people.

[22 : 25] You see, the Messiah's coming would bring about joy and salvation, joy, health, and happiness of new life and abundance. The Messiah would rescue God's people from sadness and death and tears.

The Messiah would do things and restore things to better than what they were. He would do things that only God could do. He would bring God's presence among his people and rule over God's people.

And the only way that the Messiah could do the things that the Bible describes the Messiah doing, well, is if the Messiah were God himself. So who then is this?

Jesus is God's king forever, God's Messiah, who does God's work and proclaims God's word to rescue, restore, and rule God's people perfectly.

So Luke, having shown us who Jesus is through the miraculous work, the feeding of the 5,000, and through the miraculous word, Peter's miraculous confession of who Jesus is as God's Messiah, how then should we respond to the coming of this Messiah, of God's king forever?

[23 : 50] Well, what about you? How would you respond to that king? How have you responded? Who then is this?

You see, that's not really a question that we can leave on the shelf. There's some questions that I don't really need to know the answer to. I don't need to know why that barbershop's so busy. Knowing how to spell, pronounce more guys helpful, it's not essential.

Superman's underpants, I'm never going to know, I've given up. But this question of who Jesus is, is not one of those questions. You see, Luke presents as evidence that Jesus is God's Messiah, God's anointed king, who'd rule over God's people forever.

But what is more is throughout his gospel, Luke forces the question by presenting people who either accept Jesus or who reject Jesus.

I wonder if you noticed that in this passage this evening. So Herod says, Herod asks, who then is this? And he tried to see him. And that's kind of the way of the Bible's way of saying, let's have coffee without ever setting a date and a time to do it.

[25 : 07] and throughout Luke's gospel we see Herod rejecting Jesus. And then when Jesus asks Peter, who do you say am? How does Peter respond? Peter says, you are God's Messiah.

Peter accepts and believes in the Lord Jesus. But most clearly, we see this pattern of either accepting or rejecting the Lord Jesus at the cross.

You see, when Jesus was crucified on the cross for our sins, serving as king, fulfilling all that had been prophesied as a prophet, saving us and taking the punishment that our sins deserved for our rejection of God as a priest, he was crucified with two criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

And we read, well, that one of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him. Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us.

But the other criminal rebuked him. Don't you fear God, he said, since you're under the same sentence. We are punished justly for what our deeds deserve.

[26 : 25] But this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.

So who do you say Jesus is? And how have you responded to the claims and words of Jesus? Will we go on rejecting him?

Or will we believe in his works and the words that he has said, that he is God's Messiah? Come to save us. Come to give us life in abundance. Come to provide for us.

Come to rescue us. Or will we carry on rejecting him, living our own lives in our own way without a hope? Well, let me close there in prayer for us.

Father, we thank you that you have sent your son who provides so miraculously for your people, who comes as a king, a prophet, and a priest to rule and reign over us forever.

[27 : 37] We thank you so much for Jesus. Please help us to live this year to his praise and glory. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.