

church to be a champion team? Then let us do our best in worship attendance, offering, and getting involved in the ministries and mission projects at and beyond Faith Church. At least do something (small things) to make a difference. My goal in ministry is "One Person, One Ministry."

This is a matter of faith, not a matter of ability. Faith is *"the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen."* (Hebrews 11:1) We put faith in Jesus because something deep within us calls out: 'We need Christ and we want him!' Hebrews 11:3 says, *"By faith we understand..."* It does not say, *"By understanding we believe..."* or *"By reason we believe..."* We begin to understand God and God's ways only when we begin to put our faith in the unseen and hoped for.

How can we be sure of anything about Jesus? Begin to trust our lives to him and we will begin to have the assurance and confidence we desire and need. How do we begin to trust our lives to him? Ask him to come into our lives to order the confusion, to heal the brokenness, to guide the wandering and to breathe meaning into the emptiness.

Who is Jesus Christ? What difference can he make in your life? How can you be sure of anything about him? I would like to point you in the direction of an answer for those questions. The direction to the answer is that of faith and that of trust. The more we trust Christ, the more we will know who he is. The more we trust Christ, the more we will know what he can and will do in our lives. The more we trust Christ, the more we will know all of this with confident assurance. Jesus is asking each of you the same question today: 'Who do you say that I am?' What is your answer to Jesus' question?

October 29, 2017

The Bible's Four Great Questions #3:

Who Do You Say that I Am?

Matthew 16: 13-20

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I would like to begin with a story. The Dean had already sent three letters to the fraternity house. Since the house was owned by the college, the Dean wanted the broken windows replaced before Christmas break. But, the fraternity had ignored each of the Dean's letters. So, the Dean called to the house. When one of the frat brothers answered the phone, the Dean asked to speak to Bill Anderson, the president of the fraternity. "Who is this?" asked the frat brother. "What difference does it make?" asked the Dean. "Well," answered the student, "if his mother calls, we tell her Bill is in the library studying; if his girlfriend calls, we go find him; but if that fathead dean calls, we tell him we don't know where Bill is." "Do you know who this is?" intoned the Dean. "No, how should I know who this is?" replied the student. "This is the Dean!" "Oh," replied the student who then asked, "Do you know who this is?" "No, how should I know who this is?" replied the Dean. "Good," answered the student who added, "Goodbye, fathead!"

"Do you know who this is?" or "Do you know who I am?" Jesus asked this question to his disciples during their stay in Caesarea Philippi. In fact before this question, Jesus' disciples began to wonder, "Who is he?" when Jesus fed the 5000 people with only two fishes and five loaves of bread, and when he drove evil spirits out of deeply troubled people, and when he calmed the storm that threatened to sink the boat in which he and his disciples rode, One day, he asked them, "What's the word on the street about me?" The disciples replied, *"Some say you are John the Baptist raised from the dead; others say you are the one of the great prophets of old that is back among us."* (Matthew 16:14)

This morning Jesus asks us the Bible's third great question: 'Who do you say that I am?' 'Who do we say that Jesus is?' Like impulsive Peter, we want to jump on that question and say: "You are the One! You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior, the Son of the Living God!" For some of us, that is all we need to hear for today. Then, this sermon could end here.

However, I would like to think of today's question based on Hebrews (1:1-4, 2:8-9, 11:1-3). Hebrews separates the Bible's third great question into 3 sub-questions: 1) Who is Jesus Christ? 2) What difference can he make in our lives? 3) How can we be sure of anything about him?

'Who is Jesus Christ?' Hebrews 2:17 says that Jesus was "*like his brothers and sisters [like us] in every aspect...*" and Hebrews 4:15 says that in Jesus "*we have one who in every respect has been tested [and tempted] as we are, yet [he was] without sin...*" According to Hebrews, Jesus is both God and man; he is both human and divine.

When we think of "who is Jesus?" our problem is that we want to find Jesus according to our needs or desires. For example: For those who are superstitious, Jesus is a Genie in a magic lamp who works miracles and grants wishes upon our request. For those who strive for political liberation into their faith, Jesus is the great political liberator. For feminists, Jesus is the first feminist. For rationalists, Jesus is the wise man. We tend to find Jesus by our need and favor rather than seeking 'Who Jesus really is.' Luke Timothy Johnson, a New Testament Professor at Candler School of Theology in Emory University, says, "The real Jesus for Christian faith is not simply a figure of the past but very much and above all a figure of the present." We can love Jesus and we can learn from him. But we come to know 'who he is' only by following him.

This leads to the second question: "What difference can Jesus make in our lives?" Hebrews 2:9 says: "*He tasted death for*

everyone." That means: He paid the penalty for human's original sin. He removed the obstacle blocking our relationship with God. He defeated the enemy of eternal life, which is spiritual death. Hebrews 2 assures us that in Jesus Christ, God has secured for his creation complete victory over sin and death. While we do not see full victory over sin and death yet, we see Jesus as our faith proclaims.

Jesus can and will do something in our lives today. We cannot go back to the first century to discover exactly who Jesus is but we can invite him into the 21st century to find his meaning for our lives today. This brings us to the third Hebrews questions: 'How can we be sure of anything about Jesus?' Hebrews defines it as a matter of faith: "*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1).

I am sure that many of you are going to watch the World Series game 5 this evening. As you know the game is the LA Dodgers vs. the Houston Astros. Who is the winning team? Actually, both teams had a good season this year. LA Dodgers is the champion of the National League West (104 W & 58L), while the Houston Astros is the champion of the American League West (101W & 61L). But they are not a champion team in the World Series yet. It depends on tonight's game (or probably Tuesday's game as well).

During the pastors' meeting several years ago, Rev. Kimbrough who was the speaker from Atlanta, GA, challenged us to do our best at building a champion team in our ministry for God and God's kingdom. I want to make our church a champion team. I don't want just to manage this church during my ministry here, at Faith Church. I refuse to serve a dying church. I want to make this church turnaround into a growing church and a champion team. However, the pastor alone cannot build a champion team. Together by God's grace we can make our church a champion team. We are in the same boat and on the same team. Do you want our