**Matthew 16:13-20**

**13**  Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” **14** And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” **15** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” **16** Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” **17** And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” **20**  Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

**“Behind The Great Confession”**

Grace to you and peace from Him, “who is and who was and who is to come” Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Savior. Amen. Questions are unavoidable in life. Parents above of all must respond to the interrogations brought on by children. God’s design for marriage between a man and woman is love that answers a very serious question, “as long as you both shall live?” Within the church, the rite of confirmation ends with a final question asking, “Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?” Even science exists to answer questions about our physical world and if we ever had all the answers then science would cease to exist.

Questions are fine and healthy, but humanity’s sinful fall turned it into a curse. We know a lot of stuff today and yet disbelief and suspicion seems to be out of control. No wonder when Christ near Caesarea Philippi asked a question to His disciples it came down to confessing Him. Herman Sasse writes, “Thus confession may be described as the answer to revelation, and this the revelation which occurred once in history. In her confessions the church gives her answer for all times, the answer of faith in the revelation of Christ” (The Lonely Way Vol. 1, 106). To believe in Christ is at last to confess Him. While all other questions will fade, Christ builds His Church by asking the ultimate question, “Who do you say that I am?”

1. **This question exposes the inadequate opinions against Christ.**
2. The disciples first had to give Jesus a real assessment of, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

* Maybe it was already a given, but they left out describing the disgust that the Pharisees and Sadducees had toward Him.
* At best, most Jews saw Him to be a mighty prophet promised by God’s Word, but with different views on who it was.
* However, what they had heard did not compare to what Jesus was showing them at Caesarea Philippi, a place well outside of Israel.
* This city was named after Herod the Great’s son Philip portraying the god like character of Rome’s presence. As well as, the false gods being worshiped by the Gentiles were surely evident to the eyes.

1. What kind of assessment can we give today about, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

* Sounds of a fading cultural Christianity treats Jesus as a good moral teacher and give him the all-around humanitarian award.
* Liberal Christians have gone so far that they reduced Jesus down to being a prophet equal to Muhammad or enlightened like Gandhi.
* In terms of what we see outside the church, many are treating science as a religion that they fear, love, and trust so they see no need even for God.
* Loyalty to power, pleasure, and personal gain has become the idols of what the world offers as worship.

1. **This question also opens mouths to confess the truth of Christ.**
2. After addressing the general, Jesus gets to that personal question He asked all the disciples.

* Peter representing the twelve boldly confessed saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
* The walking on water event proved Jesus to be the Son of God, but the exclusive claim here is Him being the Christ, the anointed one, the savior.
* All that Israel had hoped for was in Jesus and as the living God all other idols of the Gentiles were delusions of men and work of demons.
* This confession had divine origins with Jesus saying, “For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”

1. “Who do you say that I am,” still asks the vital question in every age.

* To confess, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” is personal, but never a private matter for any Christian.
* The Church as the body of Christ was already proclaiming these words before we arrived on the scene with God calling us by His grace.
* Claiming Jesus to be, “The Christ” means God has chosen to do the saving and the idols of the world are not going to deliver on their promises.
* Since God reveals Himself to us, His living Word creates faith and faith answers Him not from a work of man, but as a gift from God.

1. **This question finally provides the foundation to be on Christ.**
2. Christ unpacked all that Peter confessed, but they were to wait on Him.

* Everything had to be tempered and refined by the cross of what Christ would work out by His death and resurrection.
* It meant the Father revealed His Son to save sinners, as Peter on his own only could open his mouth to deny Christ three times.
* The Church was not about faith in Peter or any man, but Christ facing hell’s judgment on the cross proving, “I will build my church.”
* What Jesus would give as Savior and Lord to His Church was a ministry and confession that held keys to forgive and retain sins. (Miracle of miracles)

1. Unlike the first disciples having to wait, the Church now confesses Christ and Him crucified.

* This is the sign that marks any upon the forehead and heart when baptized for Jesus proclaimed us alive in Him.
* Flesh and blood cannot see beyond suffering, but St. Paul reminds the saints what God has revealed for our good, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind…”
* Since confessing Christ makes Him the Rock, the closure of churches is up for grabs, but “the one holy Christian and apostolic church” cannot fail and is always growing.
* By the ministry of Word and Sacrament Christ brings His binding and loosing forgiveness to preach, teach, absolve, baptize, and give the Lord’s Supper that is life for His Church.

Questions are just going to keep coming in life. Some will be good and helpful to answer, others fearful and troublesome to hear, and still others out right hostile and evil to face. As Jesus took His disciples outside the realm of the Jews and compared it to the Gentiles in Caesarea Philippi. It had to make them wonder what was going on. We have the same compare and contrast happening in our post-church culture today. Yet, all questions will fade into the background, because Christ builds His Church in every age asking the ultimate question, “Who do you say that I am?” Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.