

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke, the ninth chapter, beginning at the eighteenth verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

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, "The Christ of God."

Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected

by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray that you would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

What's your name? I assume this is a question you have heard countless times in your life. What do you want to be when you grow up? I imagine all the times I've

asked my own boys this question. They being a total 5 years old combined have no clue what I mean, but it's a way to make me feel better when they say pastor. What do you do? I suppose that this is a question you got a lot once you were all grown up or you will get once you are all grown up.

Yet, I cannot recall many times that I've walked up to a person and asked them, "So what do I do?" or even "So, who am I?" and maybe even worse open for horrible answers and attacks, "Who do they say that I am?" And yet that is the question that Jesus is asking His disciples. He is asking them what the crowds of people, and especially the teachers, thought about Him. He is in particular asking, "Who do they say that I am?"

Jesus here is looking for a very specific answer, as He continues to question His disciples, but just think about what people might say about you. How would others answer that question about you? Who do you say that I am? And while that answer might make me happy or sad, I think the question Christ asks is infinitely more important... Who do you say that He is? I pray that we all answer the same: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who died for my sins.

When Jesus asked His disciples about the crowds a multitude of answers were given. Some said John the Baptist, who had just been beheaded. So while not physically John, maybe a reincarnate of John or maybe Jesus had assumed John's spirit or legacy. Or maybe Elijah, the great prophet of old. The prophet whom God took home to be with Him. So again, not

physically Elijah, but maybe someone who had studied a lot of Elijah and knew about him. Or maybe some other prophet of old. Maybe Jeremiah, or Moses, or Zechariah, or Jonah... really any old prophet. But Jesus wasn't actually the prophet, because they were dead, so maybe Jesus was simply like those other prophets. Preaching God's word. Helping people know their sin and leading them to a more proper understanding of God.

I've always wondered though, what type of answer the average person in an ELS or WELS church would give to this question. While I do not think we would call Jesus just another prophet.. what would we call Him? When we are asked about Jesus, do we voice our opinion and God's truth or do we clam up because you don't talk about religion in public? When we are asked about our belief in Jesus are we bold

like Peter, or do we hope that the person forgets his question before he makes you answer. Or maybe even worst of all, are we like the crowds. When asked about Jesus do we offer any answer that will get us liked by others, but may not necessarily be the truth. "Oh yeah, Jesus was a great teacher." "Yep, Jesus did live and die." "Yep, there was someone named Jesus so the history says." So many times we would shy away from answering...

But when Jesus asked His disciples that all important question, it should not be shocking what answer they gave. And it was Peter who spoke up for the group, "You are the Christ of God." As Matthew (16) has it written, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." So right away we see this answer that is given... but what does it mean? Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Well first off, it does not mean that He is like a Christ. He is the Christ. The Messiah, as it were. He is the “one,” that the Jews had been waiting on since Moses passed. I mean sure there were other prophets and stuff, but this was the ONE. This was the Christ, the Messiah and there could be only one of those. And who is the Christ? Well it means the “anointed one.” The one chosen special by God. The “one” of God. The “only one” who came from God. This was a very special title that was not thrown around. This title, according to His disciples, really set Jesus apart from all other teachers and leaders. Think of all the prophecies that Jesus the Christ fulfilled pointing to His coming: born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, hung on a cross... all of these fulfilled in one man. As Philippians 2 says, ***“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ***

Jesus, who brought in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Jesus, time and again, is called the Christ, the fulfillment of all prophecy, the one anointed by God.

Secondly, Jesus is called the Son of God. The Son of God? How can God have a child? And yet... Psalm 2, “The kings of

the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One... He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.' Psalm 2 clearly tells us that the anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ is the Son of God. God became His Father. In all eternity, Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father. In the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus Christ. This is who Jesus is. When we are asked who is Jesus, this is the long hand of more simply saying, "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

And it was this Son of God who came into our world as a child. Who grew under the

supervision of Mary and Joseph. Who fulfilled the Law of God perfectly, as only God could do. Who died on the cross, as only a man could do. As Jesus says in our text, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Messiah who lived and died for us. As Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." Also Paul tells us in the letter to the Roman Christians, "theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen."

Jesus Christ, both God and man. The entirety of the Godhead living bodily in a man. And I must admit, even after years of Seminary, this concept still blows my

mind. It is, honestly, an article that all of us must chalk up to faith. We will never fully understand this article and yet, this is exactly what God teaches us. And not just us... even Peter, 2000 years ago, knew this truth and had to share it.

And then Jesus finishes His discussion with a very important piece of truth, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.” Now please understand that this one verse is a sermon series all in itself, but let us understand, simply, what Jesus is talking about.

We know that Jesus came into this world to live and die for us. We know that through the means of grace our faith in this is strengthened in Him and all that He

did. And yet He tells us that we are to deny ourselves and follow Him. Does this mean that every waking moment must be filled with thoughts of Jesus? Does this mean that we are to have nothing this side of heaven? Does this mean that if we don't go wander around Israel that we are not 'following' Him? Of course not. What Jesus is getting across to His disciples, and to us, is this: Trust in the Son of God, trust in Jesus Christ. Make sure that your faith is in the one right place and not divided. Focus your entire being on Jesus Christ... so when asked who is Jesus you have no need to waffle or withhold anything. Speak boldly. But when you don't, and there will be times, Jesus died for those times also.

We know that in this world our flesh and the world pulls us ever further from Christ, Jesus here is exhorting us to do all

within our power to not let that happen and to run to him continually. As Paul has written to the Galatians, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

So who is Jesus? He is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of mankind the anointed one, the Messiah. The list is endless. Thanks be to God that He has given us His Son, to be our Savior, a Savior that we do not deserve, and yet the Savior who loved us and redeemed us.

As Paul said in our Epistle lesson, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ

Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ... If you belong to Christ, then you are Abrahams seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Thanks be to God. Amen.