



Sermon Discussion Questions
03-08-26

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Sermon Series: I Believe
Week 3: Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord

1. ICE BREAKER: In the message, we talked about life being made up of experiences. What's one memorable experience (trip, concert, event, moment with friends, etc.) you wish you could relive for a day?
2. Read our Scripture for this week, Matthew 16:13-20:

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴They 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?"¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷Jesus 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. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."²⁰Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

What words or phrases stick out to you as you read this Scripture? Talk about how understanding the context of the "Gates of Hades" and the Greek god Pan helps adds to your understanding of this story.

3. Pastor Dale said that in his experience, many people who are seeking to know God start from a place of guilt, or experience the “spiritual disease” of shame. Guilt is about the things we do, whereas shame becomes about who we are.

Why do you think those emotions are such a common starting point in people’s spiritual journeys? Why do you think it’s so common to move from feeling guilty about actions to carrying shame about our identity?

4. In Matthew 16:13, Jesus asks the disciples, “*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*” This is the most important question that we will ever answer in our lives.

Why do you think people throughout history have had so many different ideas about who Jesus is? How would you answer this question for yourself? Has your answer changed or evolved throughout your life? If so, how?

5. The message described a spiritual awakening as becoming aware of God’s presence through experiences in life. If our life is made up of experiences, as Dallas Willard says, then our faith is also made up of experiences with God.

Have you ever had a moment or season that made you more aware of God? What was happening in your life at that time? Share a specific experience you’ve had with God that changed how you thought about Him, or pursued Him.

6. If we don’t have spiritual experiences that make our faith personal, we end up trying to live on a residue of remembered religion or inherited faith.

Discuss the difference between faith you’ve inherited from others and faith that has become your own. Who are some of the people that you “inherited” faith from? What do you think helps move someone from simply knowing about Jesus to actually trusting Him?

7. Reread Matthew 16:16. Peter confessed His understanding of who Jesus was, which was different from the other disciples. All the disciples tell Jesus what they “hear” from people, and Peter tells Jesus what he’s coming to believe.

What do you think helped Peter move from repeating what others were saying about Jesus to personally believing who Jesus is? Share some of the ways that you are making your relationship with Jesus personal to you, and not just listening to what others ‘hear’ about Jesus.

8. John Kavanaugh, a philosopher and ethicist, once visited Mother Teresa. While he was there, he asked her to pray for clarity. She responded that she would not pray for clarity, and that what he needed, and what she had, was not clarity, but trust.

Are you a person who is more likely to pray for clarity or trust? Why? What do you think it looks like to trust God even when we don't have clear answers? What are some ways that God is asking you to increase your trust right now?

9. PRACTICE: This whole series will be spent in the Apostles' Creed. For your weekly faith practice with your group, we encourage you to end by saying the Apostles' Creed together. Perhaps you will memorize it by the end of Lent! Try to really think about the words and their meaning as you say them out loud.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead.

The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there, He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.