

August 30, 2020

"Who do you say that I am?"

"Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say that I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked, "Who do you say that I am?"

Mark 8:27-29

All of us have been tried in many, many ways over the past several months. We've suffered loss, we've struggled with insecurity, we've faced unprecedented challenges, and we've struggled to come to terms with COVID 19. It has all been, at least a bit, overwhelming for each and everyone of us.

In the face of these struggles where have we turned for help? Have we depended on our own strength and wisdom? Have we turned to the strength of others? Have we listened to the wisdom of the world? Or, in the face of all this chaos are we turning to our God and Father in heaven?

Where we turn in times of challenge really answers the question that Jesus asked the twelve. **"But what about you? Who do you say that I am?"** Our answer to that question is most honestly reflected in our personal actions and reactions in difficult times. We are always being defined not by what we say, but in every way, by what we do, and this is especially true in tough times.

After the twelve returned from their first preaching tour Jesus tried to take them away from the crowds so that they could rest and debrief. But even in this circumstance the crowds tracked them down. It is important, I think, to remember this context in what happens next.

The Apostles have just returned from their first solo preaching tour. They had personally experience preaching to their own crowds and driving out demons and healing people on their own. They are and should be on an emotional and spiritual high. But this crowd, Jesus knows, are like **"...sheep without a shepherd..."** so he spends the rest of the day teaching and preaching.

As the day winds down the disciples came to him encouraging him to send the crowd home so that they can eat. Jesus tells the twelve, **"You give them something to eat."** In the face of everything they have personally and individually experienced with the Master what is their response? Their response is absolutely pragmatic. Their thinking has already returned to the world. **"That would take eight months of a man's wage."**



Even though they have experienced the tremendous power of Jesus demonstrated in so many ways; even though they have wielded some of that power themselves, when faced with a basic challenge they return to their own understanding and depend on their own wisdom. 'It can't be done! We can't begin to feed them all.'

Of course the outcome of the story is familiar to all of us. With five small loaves of bread and two fish Jesus, the Master provider, feeds the crowd of more than five thousand, and the disciples collect twelve baskets of leftovers. Jesus demonstrates once again that he will provide, but like us, the twelve struggle to hold on to their faith in that truth.

So, in the face of all we have struggled to survive over the past several months where do we turn? Do we turn to our own wisdom and strength? Do we turn to the wisdom and strength of others? Or, do we turn to the one we call Lord and Master to deliver us even from this present chaos?

Who we have turned to and who we are turning to right now says everything about our true faith. When we turn to Jesus in the face of every struggle and every challenge then we are living, **"You are the Christ, the Son of God"** not just preaching it. Is Jesus your Christ? Is Jesus your Son of God? Does your life confirm your faith?

