

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, August 21-27 (A) – Matthew 16:13-20

Tips of Discipleship: *Declare Christ*

Focus Question: *Who do you say Jesus is?*

word of life

“Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’” Matthew 16:16 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 16:13-20

People are talking about Jesus and his identity. He has performed miracles, healed the sick, and taught with authority. How could people not be talking about him? Jesus asks the question, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13 NRSV) Jesus began with the assumption people knew he was the Son of Man, but he wanted to know what else was being said about him.

1. *How do the disciples respond to the question of Jesus?*
2. *What might be additional answers to his question?*
3. *Do you think Jesus was primarily concerned with what “others” thought about him? Why or why not?*

This dialogue among Jesus and the disciples seems to be a warm-up for the real question, “But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15 NRSV) It is one thing to converse about the faith of others; it is something quite different to confess faith in Jesus Christ for oneself.

Peter is the first to speak up as he confesses his faith. “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16 NRSV) *Messiah* is Hebrew for the Greek word “*Christ*”. It means “*anointed one*”. Yet Peter recognizes that Jesus is not anointed by a human, but by God, one who is living and active in the world.

4. *What do you think of the quick response of Peter?*
5. *What is your overall impression of Peter?*
6. *What do you make of the silence of the other disciples?*

Jesus responds to Peter with a blessing, acknowledging God at work in Peter’s life, stirring the right response at a time of testing. Just as Peter proclaimed, “You are the Messiah”, so Jesus responds with a parallel phrase “You are Peter.” To understand the weight of the statement made by Jesus, a person needs to realize “*Peter*” means “*rock*”.

7. *What does it mean to be called “Rock”?*

Jesus intends to build his church based on these words uttered by Peter with the help of God. Biblical scholars have debated the meaning and implications of this well-known confession of Peter. The Roman Catholic Church believes Peter to be the first pope with the church being built upon him as a person. The reformers understood the church is built upon the faith of Peter. Thus congregations can grow wherever faith in Jesus is expressed. Surprisingly, Jesus gives to the church the privilege and responsibility to forgive and not to forgive sins.

8. *When might the church not forgive sins?*
9. *How do you understand Jesus’ reference to building the church on a rock?*
10. *What surprises you about this passage?*

word among us

The summer vacation in Oregon was almost over, but the Jones family had not conquered “the Rock”. From the first moment the family had seen the boulder outside their hotel window, they were determined to climb it. Yet, it seemed to be an almost impossible feat. Instead, the family would often pause near the boulder and someone would weave a story involving the great adventures of this boulder. There was only one rule to the storytelling – each story had to end by explaining how the boulder ended up behind the hotel.

On the last day of the visit, a work crew started work on the back wing of the hotel. Someone in the family asked to borrow a ladder and several pieces of scaffolding. With no time at all, the family had created a scaffold and climbed the boulder. They had conquered the impossible. Once on top of the boulder, the family danced, laughed, and celebrated life.

1. *Take a moment to remember great rocks in your life. Describe the biggest boulder which you have every seen.*
2. *How do rocks stand the test the time?*

Peter was called “*Petros*”, a word which means “*rock*”. He stood firm in his confession of Jesus as the Messiah, God’s anointed. Jesus blessed him in his confession, but acknowledged his words came from God.

3. *Describe faith which is steadfast like a rock.*
4. *Who in your life has faith like a rock?*
5. *What have you learned from people who are steadfast in their faith?*

The text of the well-known hymn “The Church’s One Foundation” was written by Samuel J. Stone, a man who lived between 1839-1900. Take a moment to prayerfully read through the first verse:

*The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is his new creation by water and the word.
From heaven came and sought her to be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her, and for every life he died.*

Hopefully, we have been blessed by others of faith who bear witness to a life built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Let us pray we have served as such a witness to others.

6. *Recall when you have sung that hymn. What images does it spark?*
7. *How are the images associated with “foundation” and “rock” similar or different?*
8. *How have you tried to build your life on the foundation of Jesus Christ?*
9. *What would have to change in your life for you to have faith like a rock?*

Prayer

Rock of Ages, help me to build my life on the rock of Jesus Christ. Amen

Dig Deeper

Romans 12:1-8

last word

Find a rock to stand on or a stone to hold.
Consider what it means to build your life
on the rock of Jesus Christ.



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