

Renegade Gospel: The Most Important Question You Will Have to Answer

Luke 9:18-20

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On this 3<sup>rd</sup> season of Lent we continue our discussion of the Renegade Gospel: The Rebel Jesus. In the first 2 messages of this series we have talked about why Jesus was a Rebel in His day' we have talked about His revolutionary lifestyle and how the struggle we have to live out that same revolutionary lifestyle today.

So today we come with many questions (**Image**). We deal with questions every day. Some are not as significant and as important as others. Questions such as, "What will I wear today?" Or "Where will I eat after church?" may be good questions, but in the light of all things are not that super important.

I couldn't help but think of The Riddler (**image**) from the Batman movies and comic books and TV show. He had those questions mark all over him. (**image**) If you remember the Riddler always gave Batman a fit by asking a question (a riddle) as part of a bigger clue. I looked up some of Riddler's questions. Let me share a couple with you.

**What is the beginning of eternity, the end of time and space, the beginning of every end and the end of every race?**

**Answer: The letter 'E'**

**What weighs six ounces, sits in a tree, and is very dangerous?**

**Answer: A sparrow with a machine gun.**

Okay, once again not super significant questions. In my life there have been some important questions I have asked or have been asked to me. When I was a Senior in college and dating this girl by the name of Sarah Lovan our relationship developed to the point of me thinking about popping that all important question: "Will you marry me?" Now this comes of no surprise certainly to staff and those who know me...I like things planned out. So in my mind I was planning how I was going to propose and pop the question. Would I be down on one knee? Would I give her roses after a candlelit dinner?

Well Sarah can read my like a book---and messed up all my planning. We were in her driveway, I don't know if we were getting ready to go on a date or if we were just coming back, but she looked at me and could tell something was on my mind and she asked me a question, "What are you thinking?" Okay, this was not what I had planned out...but I knew that I had to say something. So when she said, "What are you thinking?" I said, "About marriage." Her romantic response was "Me too." And then my next super romantic blundering comment was, "Well...." So, that important pop the question moment was not like I had envisioned.

However on July 17, 1982 I was asked this important question, "David Baldrige will you have Sarah Lovan to be your wife, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?"

My answer to those very important questions was, “I will.” That was such an important questions and important life changing ceremony, that I was stressed. After the Unity Candle ceremony I was suppose to kiss my new bride, my wife Sarah....I forgot. Sarah however gently reminded me as she whispered “Kiss me you fool.”

Now another important question I was asked happened at my ordination as a United Methodist minister. I was asked by the Bishop nearly 30 years ago now: Do you believe that God has called you to the life and work of an elder?

My answer: I do so believe.

I was then asked: Will you, for the sake of the church’s life and mission, covenant to participate in the order of elders? Will you give yourself to God through the order of elders in order to sustain and build each other up in prayer, study, worship, and service?

My answer: I will, with the help of God,

Those two questions that I answered changed my life....but it was still not the most important question that I’ve ever answered. A critical question, a life changing, yes an eternal life changing question is “What am I going to do with this man named Jesus?” Or as scripture has Jesus saying, “Who do you say that I am?”

Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And they respond...some say you are really John the Baptist---a really good preacher. Some say you are Elijah....the great and wonderful prophet. And some say you an old prophet come back to life....you are a great teacher.

Allow me to do a Baldrige paraphrase and Jesus says “I don’t care what others say, who do YOU say that I am?”

Friends, the bottom line is that it does not matter what others are saying....even others sitting next to you.... “Who do you say Jesus is?” That is the most important question you will ever have to answer.

In one sense this Jesus is well known. Why the book about Him and His story....The Bible has according to Guinness Book of World Records sold more books than any other in the history of the world. An approximate 5 billion Bibles.

Why even our calendar dating system reflects Christ. The date B.C. for example. If I were to say 500 B.C.---it would mean that I was talking about 500 years B.C.---that is Before Christ. When I say 2016 A.D.----now let me stop and say that for years I thought if B.C. stood for Before Christ then A.D. would stand for After Death. That is incorrect. The A.D. stands for “anno Domini” which is Latin for “in the year of our Lord.” Anno=annual, year of Domini=master, Lord.

Now to be honest the academic and professional world has now taken Christ out of the dating systems. B.C. instead of Before Christ has now been designated by scholars as BCE. Before Common Era (e-r-a). And instead of A.D. it is now CE (Common Era). Well beloved I still use B.C. and A.D.---because I am living in the year of the Lord!

So what are you going to do with this Jesus? Who is He? C.S. Lewis one who did not believe in God, but began study and ended up being a very strong believer wrote the following in his book *Mere Christianity*.

**“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic---on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg---or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse.”**

Basically Lewis said we had only 3 choices about Jesus.

**He is either a LIAR, a LUNATIC, or LORD!**

Just a couple of verses beyond what was read this morning from Luke 9: 18-20 we find these words of Jesus in **verse 23: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”**

As we leave that verse up know that Jesus says we must deny ourselves. That is Radical. That is Revolutionary. But that’s not all....there’s more....it says “let him deny himself and take up his cross (what) XXXX DAILY. And there’s even more...after deny yourself daily...then follow.

Slaughter in his book mentions something that I found quite fascinating. I am going to quote him as he quotes author Lois Tverberg. He says she noted “disciples were urged to be ‘covered in the dust of your Rabbi.’ In other words disciples were to follow their rabbi so closely that the dust kicked up by the Rabbi’s feet as he walked along the road or path would coat their cloak and hair. (Slaughter, *Renegade Gospel*, page 59)

Again Slaughter puts it this way. “Following means we cannot remain stationary. When I confess that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God, I commit to follow Jesus in a lifestyle of sacrificial service, walking in the dust of my Rabbi. Whatever my rabbi values, I value. Whatever my Rabbi thinks about God, I think about God. Whatever my Rabbi thinks about people, I think about people. Whatever my Rabbi believes about wealth, I believe about wealth. Whatever my Rabbi believes about the poor, I believe about the poor. Whatever my Rabbi believes about creation, I believe. I act like my Rabbi, talk like my Rabbi, love like my Rabbi, and give my life away for my Rabbi’s mission.”

Are we following Rabbi Jesus so close that we are covered with His dust?

So it is not about the crowd, but who do you say that Jesus is? So Peter replies, “You are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the kerygma of which we find the ultimate meaning in our interpersonal relationships.” And Jesus said, “Say what?” (Peter’s reply from page 30 of *Renegade Gospel* Leader guide.)

No, Peter simply, and yet profoundly answered the question saying, “Christ of God.”

Let’s look at what we call the ‘logo slide’ of this sermon (**image**). I need all the help I can get, and it was actually Rev. Cathy who pointed something out to me. Look at the R. Do you see what is actually highlighted? The vertical line of the R, but look at the horizontal line of the R...see how it extends to the left of the R. Why....part of the R is in the shape of a xxxx CROSS.

It’s about the cross. This Lenten season, this time before Easter is when we focus on and realize what the cross means. And who this One on the cross was. The most important question you will ever answer is about this man on the cross. Who do you say that He is?

One man...who made a difference over 2000 years ago. One man who has made a difference in my life. One man who is making a difference in the life of our church. One man who is making a difference in our community through you.

There is a poem written in 1926 by Dr. James Allan Francis that I first heard several years ago when our daughter Jenny was singing in the Candlelight Christmas Processional at Disney. I know some of your children have done that. A magnificent presentation. During that presentation they have a celebrity read this special poem. Back when our daughter was part of the High School Choir that was asked to sing I believe the celebrity was Phylicia Rashad.

The poem is typically heard at Christmas. But friends the message of the Gift of Christmas comes full circle with the Cross and this Jesus.

### One Solitary Life (**Video**)

This one who has made the most impact on the world than anyone else asks you... “Who do you say that I am?” I don’t care what others say.... “Who do YOU say that I am?”

Who is He? The most important question you will ever be asked is... “Who do you say that Jesus is?”

We are His people....the Church. I am not talking about the Church building....but you the people who are the Church.

### **Ephesians 2:20 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.**

He IS the Son of God! He IS the Son of Man! He IS the Servant of all! He IS the Savior of the world! He is the One that holds us together. He is the One who took the punishment and died on the cross for us. He IS the cornerstone!!!!