



## Who Is Jesus to Me?

New Testament Reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Good morning. First of all, I would like to thank the pastor and leaders of this church for this opportunity. As Pastor Jeff has announced, we will be having the "TASTE of NEPAL" event after the WINK service, this evening. And the group who travelled to Nepal will be sharing their experience while in Nepal, and also will be sharing the food that they ate for about eight days. So, you have an opportunity to experience Nepal here in this church. Today is also World Communion Sunday, which means there is something that unites the whole world. That something is the name "Jesus Christ." So I thought it is appropriate to share how people in Nepal think about Jesus.

In the text today, Jesus is asking his disciples two questions about himself. By this time, the disciples had been with Jesus for quite a while, and they have learned, seen and experienced many things including miracles and healings. When Jesus asks, "Who do people say I am?" The disciples have many answers. They say, well, many people think you are one of the prophets, like, some say Elijah, Jeremiah...some even say you are John the Baptist!

I wonder what Jesus might have thought! I am not surprised to hear them saying, one of the prophets, or Elijah or even Jeremiah...it's written in the Bible that before the messiah comes God will send Elijah and other prophets. But I am surprised some of them even thought Jesus was John the Baptist! How could they say this? Jesus and John the Baptist were of same age! They were relatives and they existed together in the same village! Two of the disciples of Jesus, in fact, were once disciples of John the Baptist.

When we don't know, we give strange answers! But Jesus does not say anything, whether the answer was right or wrong. But he asks disciples, what about you, who do you say I am? The disciples look at each other, and Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus is pleased with the answer Peter gave, and Jesus reveals his plan to establish the church and says, "The gates of hell shall not overcome it." And the existence of church has continued until our day, and it is growing in many parts of the world.

Has anybody asked you who is Jesus? I do not know about you, but I asked my father about 30 years ago a similar question. I saw a picture of Jesus on the Cross, in one of my textbooks, and asked him, who was that miserable man hanging on the Cross? The answer of my father was,

"He is the American's god." I was so sorry for the Americans. We were not Christian then. When I reflect back on the answer my father gave, what he said was Jesus is one of many gods. There are many gods, god of Africans, god of Russians, god of Chinese, and 330 million gods of Hindus. It was similar to the answer of the people, who said Jesus as Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. What they were saying was Jesus is one of the many prophets. There are many like Jesus.

But today, my father's answer would be completely different. Within a few years, he believed in Jesus, and became Christian. If you ask Christians in Nepal, who is Jesus, they would say, Jesus is the only true God, the God who created heaven and earth.

- They would say Jesus is the only God **who forgives sins**. According to Hindu belief, whenever sin increases in the world, a Hindu god will incarnate and destroys the sinners and rewards righteous. But no matter how hard they try, they cannot live life without sin. But Jesus said I have not come to save the righteous but the sinners. They find hope in Jesus.

- They would say Jesus is the true God who has **power to heal the sick**. In fact, almost one third of the congregation in most of the church in Nepal have experience some kind of healing. Usually they first go to the witch doctor, then the medical doctor, and when nothing works, they go to church, and they are healed. One might ask why doesn't God heal in the USA? God heals in USA through medicines and doctors. Does God heal everyone through prayer? No. Does God heal everyone through medicine? No.

- They believe only Jesus can give **true peace, joy and eternal life**. And they have abandoned their 330 million gods and goddesses to follow this one God.

However, in the context of Nepal, it is not easy to say Jesus is the only true God. If one says, Jesus is also a god, he or she has no problem but when one says, Jesus Christ alone is the true God who can forgive sins and give eternal life, there is a price to be paid. Because of their exclusive faith in Jesus, many have been abandoned by their own family members, their society, and many were even imprisoned. Because Nepal is predominantly a Hindu country, the Nepali calendar and life in Nepal are generally associated with the Hindu system.

As we are being influenced by post-modern ideas and inclusive thoughts, one might think that why don't they simply add Jesus as one of their gods maintaining their relationship with the other Hindu gods as well? Why do they have to insist on ONLY JESUS! The reason is revealed in the response of Jesus to Peter. When Peter said, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus said, "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father in heaven."

What Jesus is saying is that, on our own, by the power of our flesh and blood or brain, we cannot know who Jesus really is. Only when the Holy Spirit/Father in heaven reveals to us will we be able to say Jesus is my Lord. It is very easy to say Jesus is one of the many but it takes the work of God or the Holy Spirit for us to say that Jesus Christ is the only true God.

Until the Holy Spirit reveals, we will see Jesus like many others. But when the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and reveals to us, like Peter we will be able to say you are the Christ, the only God. And when the Holy Spirit reveals who Jesus is, one becomes ready to pay any price. Not only in Nepal, I just heard in the news this week about a pastor **Yousef Nadarkhani** in Iran. He

is going through trial in a court, and given a choice to either renounce his faith in Jesus or face the death penalty. And he is ready to die but not renounce his faith in Jesus.

How does the Holy Spirit convince us? I do not know how, but I can share my experience.

Our family became Christian when I was in 7th grade. However, when I finished my 10th grade, my mind was filled with lots of questions, and I started to think that there is no God. I did not believe in Hindu gods, and also Jesus did not look like a real God to me. And I was convinced that there is no God. I was studying science at that time. So I stopped going to church. By that time, my father was one of the leaders in the church. My parents did not know because I did not tell them. The church was far, we had to change two buses, so one week my parents would go and another week they will send my brother and me to the church. But we, instead of going to church, went to the movies and made use of the money we got for bus fare and offering. After sometime they eventually found out that we are not going to church.

When they asked why I was not going to church, finally I had to tell them that, "I do not believe in God, because there is no God." When my parents heard this, they were shocked! In their eyes, I was a good Christian. So the news reached the church leaders. The leaders asked us what the reason was. I told them, I have many questions about God. So they arranged a time for question and answer. My brother and I would ask and the leaders would answer. Though their answers to our questions did not satisfy us, we decided to go to church, just for the sake of my parents.

After a few months, I got opportunity to participate in a discipleship-training program conducted by the church. It was during the training, something happen to me. I felt God really spoke to my heart, and I was convinced that there is a God, and Jesus Christ is God. This incident totally changed my life. I still had those questions and there are still no answers, but it did not matter to me anymore. I became actively involved in church, also participated all youth fellowships, house fellowships, and eventually decided to go to a Bible College.

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