

Sermon: Confession and Consequences

Text: Luke 9:18-27

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Introduction: In every gospel account where we hear the confession of Peter, it is placed by the writer after where Jesus miraculously feeds multitudes of people. Jesus had been enjoying a rise in popularity. The crowds were getting larger. And that is why Jesus needed to get away. Matthew and Mark tell us the location is Caesarea Philippi some 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

It is also at critical times in Jesus' ministry that we find him away from the crowds and focusing on his relationship with the Father. We find him praying often in Luke. It may have been for guidance or strength. It may have been to hear a voice whose only agenda was love.

After all of this, after everything that had happened, Jesus needed to check where his disciples were spiritually by asking a question. This question is still continually posed today by billions of people.

To begin:

I. Who Is Jesus (vv. 18-21)?

Asking the *right* question is forever more important than just asking questions and being inquisitive. Asking the right question can be a matter of life and death. (The following was taken from Pastor Steven J. Cole's sermon: *The Crucial Question*.)

“When the temperature soared to 120 degrees, a missionary in South America was tempted to cool off with a swim in the local river, but he was leery because of the man-eating fish. The locals assured him, though, that piranhas only bite people while the fish are swimming in schools, which they never did in that part of the river. So each afternoon for the rest of the summer, the missionary enjoyed cooling off in the river.

Months later he heard reports that a local fisherman had fallen out of his boat and had not been found. Alarmed, the missionary asked his neighbors if perhaps the man had been eaten by piranhas. ‘Oh, no’ they assured him. ‘Only while swimming in schools do piranhas bite people, and they never swim in schools around here’

‘But why not around here?’ the missionary asked.

‘Oh,’ the neighbor casually replied, ‘they never swim in schools where there are alligators.’ (adapted from Reader's Digest [7/96], p. 48)

Not only asking the right question, but asking the right person is vitally important especially when it comes to spiritual matters.

Luke 9:18-21 (NIV) ¹⁸Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?” ¹⁹They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.” ²⁰“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “The Christ of God.” ²¹Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

A. There is a man-inspired response.

Over the years there have been many attempts to answer the question: “Who is Jesus?” Early there was a heresy called Docetism that said Jesus did not have a human body and only appeared to have died. Gnosticism found a similar aversion to the material world and Jesus became a type of spiritual idea.

These early audiences of Jesus thought he might be a reincarnation of a past great prophet, even John the Baptist back to life. It seems none of them had believed Jesus might be the Messiah.

Just like today, you can take opinion polls everyday and still not discover the truth or what is right. You see the people’s idea was that the Messiah was going to be political like a conquering king. His reign would involve taking care of all the people’s needs and concerns and righting all wrongs. Every prophet had a sermon entitled: *When the Messiah Comes...*

Today there are still well-meaning, but hugely mistaken religious groups who follow a Jesus that has been stripped of his deity and power. He has been reduced to an Idea, rather than a Person. These cults some of whom even go by the name Christian have seduced people into believing there is no hell, no judgment, only love and forgiveness for everyone. They have robbed Jesus of his true identity and themselves of heaven.

B. There is a God-inspired response.

Simon Peter gets it, but not without God’s help. Matthew lets us in on this insight. Listen to Jesus’ response to Peter’s confession:

Matthew 16:17 (NIV) ¹⁷Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

The question of who Jesus is was posed to the group, but it was Peter who spoke back in faith. Faith can be and is corporate sometimes, but it also must be personal while never private.

C. There is a God-timed response.

The crowds were getting excited. Even though most thought he was simply at best the forerunner to the Messiah, some were talking about promoting him to King. Jesus wanted no part of this because it was not a part of his mission. He had turned down similar disingenuous offers by Satan earlier ([Luke 4](#)). Jesus was now in the process of more clearly defining what it meant to be one of his disciples.

Even in John's gospel we see the crowds beginning to leave when they realize that there are requirements of them that require sacrifice on their parts. After Jesus' *Bread of Life* discourse we read.

[John 6:66 \(NIV\)](#) ⁶⁶From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

What had started with great fanfare and popularity would within a year turn to "crucify him!"

So why not tell the world that Jesus was the Messiah? No one, not even Peter, yet understood what *Messiah* meant. It would be after the resurrection, really at Pentecost that Peter and others would see not just the Messiah of God, but God.

As the Messiah:

II. What Is Jesus' Agenda (v. 22)?

[Luke 9:22 \(NIV\)](#) ²²And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

All of this was odd and unbelievable news in the ears of everyone including Peter and the disciples. Like Matthew's longer account, Luke does not include Peter's rebuke of Jesus, or Jesus' subsequent rebuke of Peter.

[Matthew 16:22-23 \(NIV\)](#) ²²Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" ²³Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

No matter what people thought they knew about the Messiah, Jesus was clear.

A. He must suffer.

It would take time to overturn the popular concepts of what the Messiah should be like. Yet, God's plan was to be fulfilled just like [Isaiah 53](#) and [Psalm 22](#) had predicted.

Jesus, The Lamb of God, was to give his life and blood by way of one of the most painful methods of death at the time. This fact is not to be skipped over because it is one of the graphic and poignant ways God showed his love for us. God in Jesus became our substitute and representative preventing our necessary damnation. It is up to us to repond to that kind of love by obeying our God and coming to him in repentance, confessing Him as Lord and Savior.

B. He must be rejected.

Certainly one of the most painful verses to hear is found in John's prologue to his gospel. [John 1:10-11 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

In a world that thirsts for fame, notoriety, and recognition, Jesus was willing to be rejected to provide a perfect sacrifice so He might welcome his Church into heaven some day.

C. He must be killed.

[Hebrews 9:22 \(NIV\)](#) ²²In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Jesus gave his life willingly for us so that we might have eternal life with him. Jesus' death not only accounts for our sin, but motivates us to his service. To ignore such a great sacrifice is to pass on the possibility of escaping punishment for our sins.

In his book, *The Cross of Christ*, John R.W. Stott wrote, "The cross undermines our self-righteousness. We stand before it with a bowed head and a broken spirit, and there we remain until the Lord Jesus speaks to our hearts his word of pardon and acceptance, and we, gripped by his love and brimful of thanksgiving, go out into the world to live our lives in his service."

D. He must be raised to life.

After all the acts of love Jesus willingly does, there is a great and miraculous event on which all of of orthodox Christianity is founded - the bodily resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God raised Jesus from the dead after three days, and that is the gospel Paul tells us.

I Corinthians 15:3-4 (NIV) ³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

This is good news!

We all like to talk about our children/grandchildren. Not much time is spent discussing conception, morning sickness, labor or delivery. The picture we get of the new-born once he/she has been cleaned of afterbirth, washed, fed and put in the best clothes they may wear for two years is not an entirely accurate one. It is the idea of the end result that we like. I was so excited about Eli's birth I sent around a picture of a newborn girl whose picture I had mistakenly gotten from Mid-Michigan Regional Medical Center's web page.

I guess most of us want to talk about the end result rather than the difficult, if not messy, process. It is like rejoicing at Easter without recognizing the cost of Good Friday. It is like enjoying national peace without honoring the cost of freedom.

There are consequences to knowing Jesus. We must model our lives after our Savior. The question then is: to be a disciple:

III. What Must I Do (vv. 23-26)?

When you think about it, Jesus' agenda is also ours. His mission statement is also ours, not by default, but out of love.

Luke 9:23 (NIV) ²³Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

First of all I want you to realize these commands Jesus issued are not for the inner-circle disciples or the spiritually elite, but for everyone, *anyone* who confesses Jesus to be Lord. If anyone is going to follow Jesus he/she must:

A. Deny self.

This is not like giving up sardine and liver sandwiches for Lent. It is an intentional act of worship that puts God always first and others after that. This is not denial *to* self, but denial *of* self. In a time when hedonism and pleasure is not withheld but embraced, it is difficult to find disciples who will give up time, money, power, position, pleasure, or convenience in order to obey the will of God.

If you are living for yourself, you are not living for Jesus, let alone following Him. Some people only think of Jesus when *they* need something. What we ought to practice is Jesus' prayer of submission: **Mark 14:36 (NIV)** ³⁶"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

It seems to me that **verses 24-26** are still talking about what it means to deny self.

Luke 9:24-26 (NIV) ²⁴For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. ²⁵What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? ²⁶If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

“To gain the whole world at the expense of one’s soul is a bad investment and a losing proposition.” - Bock, Luke, p. 266

If you are truly a disciple, you must:

B. Take up your cross.

And Luke has the word “daily.” This is a continual, habitual activity that a disciple initiates. This is not some passive activity that we just suffer under or put up with. This is a kingdom choice.

We have lost the graphic impact of what was involved with “taking up a cross.” It meant you were going to die. When we give our hearts and minds to Jesus, the old self dies. We cannot entertain the world hoping to remain popular with everyone.

Galatians 6:14 (NIV) ¹⁴May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

When a disciple is reminded of what Jesus has done, it motivates him to follow Jesus’ example - certainly not physically, but spiritually with all our hearts.

Bonhoeffer is certainly correct when he said: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” Or as James Dobson said: “If you’re not going to carry your cross, don’t make the trip.”

If you are truly a disciple, you must:

C. Follow Jesus.

Those of us who have said “I do!” could never have imagined where life would take us. I imagine there has been pain and sorrow and loss. I would hope there has also been great joy and love and peace. I know at 16 Teresa Jonette Riesenbeck had not a clue where God would take us, she only knew she loved me and I loved her.

Following Jesus is like that. The journey is initiated in love, and we have no idea what life will bring. It will be sustained in love through difficulty and unexplained grief. It will finally end in love’s goal to make perfect our relationship with God.

Not everyone takes the same journey, but all those who truly follow Jesus end up in the same place: heaven! Whether you die at 28 as a martyr like the missionary, Jim Elliot, or you live to be 105, there is really only one question. It is the same question Jesus asked Peter after he had denied him.

John 21:15-19 (NIV) ¹⁵When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” ¹⁷The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Conclusion: There has certainly been a change in perspective from when Jesus posed this question to his new followers. The Kingdom of God that was coming, has come (v. 27)!

Luke 9:27 (NIV) ²⁷I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

Even so, the question of Jesus’ identity is a valid one, and still being voiced. Jesus has accomplished everything necessary to establish his Kingdom until his second and final coming when He will retrieve the Faithful Church. In the interim, whether long-time or short, the requirements remain the same. One point is clear: there is no room in heaven for the half-hearted and ashamed. How is it with you, today?

“WALKING REQUIRES TWO FEET.” Caesarius of Arles - Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, *Mark*, p. 113 gives us this:

“When the Lord tells us in the Gospel that anyone who wants to be his follower must renounce himself, the injunction seems harsh; we think he is imposing a burden on us. But an order is no burden when it is given by one who helps in carrying it out. To what place are we to follow Christ if not where he has already gone? We know that he has risen and ascended into heaven; there, then, we must follow him. There is no cause for despair -- by ourselves we can do nothing, but we have Christ’s promise....One who claims to abide in Christ ought to walk as he walked. Would you follow Christ?”

Then be humble as he was humble. Do not scorn his lowliness if you want to reach his exultation. Human sin made the road rough. Christ's resurrection leveled it. By passing over it himself he transformed the narrowest of tracks into a royal highway. Two feet are needed to run along this highway; they are humility and charity. Everyone wants to get to the top--well, the first step to take is humility. Why take strides that are too big for you--do you want to fall instead of going up? Begin with the first step, humility, and you will already be climbing."

SERMONS 159, I.4-6.

"So discipleship is a full-time job, not a weekend hobby. As a lifestyle and commitment, it never takes a holiday. That is why Jesus says we should bear our cross daily." - Bock, *Luke*, p. 269