Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

So, if Jesus had asked you the question that he asked his disciples, what would your answer have been? Seriously, what would you have answered to his question: **“But what about you, who do you say I am?”** If you want that question put into maybe a more modern form I think I can do that for you. “But what about you, what is it specifically that you absolutely know about Me?”

That’s a fairly important question isn’t it? As I sit back and survey the modern religious world I am not sure anymore that any answer would surprise me. I say that because I think a lot of people are kind of like Judas…you know, Judas Iscariot the one who would betray Jesus and the one that Scripture clearly declares ended in hell because of his unbelief. While it is true that at this moment Jesus will treat all the disciples the same when it comes to the answer that was given by Peter, please note that somewhere along the line Judas stopped…stopped believing the confession and words found here. Judas rejected the obvious about Jesus as I believe many people do.

How do I know that? By the confession of people! Who do you say Jesus is? “Jesus is Love,” is a very popular reply. But what does that mean? To say simply that Jesus is love is to miss so much more of what Jesus is. Love is only one of his immutable qualities, only one small part of the majesty and marvel that Jesus is. To only consider that “Jesus is love” is like taking a blind person to a zoo and having them only feel the tail of the elephant. Now what a blind person feels is what they see. They would then tell you, “The elephant is a worm like creature, long and slender with a tuft of hair.” While it is true that an elephant’s tail is long and slender with a tuft of hair, that certainly doesn’t tell us anything about what the total elephant is like. The same with saying “Jesus is love.” While that is certainly true about Jesus, it doesn’t give us the total picture of Jesus and thus really doesn’t tell us anything about what Jesus is completely. (Just so you know, whenever I run across that person who only thinks “Jesus is love” I know right then and there that this person is very liberal in their beliefs. The only reason you would ever settle on that description of Jesus is because you don’t like the real Jesus and you want to reject most of what the real Jesus is about!)

Or people may claim, “Jesus is God.” Maybe they grasp the full implications of that and maybe they don’t. Do you know how you can tell if they grasp the full implication? Look at their life. Look at how they act and behave, at what they do and what is important to them. I remember once reading the challenge that if you really want to take a critical look at your life then take a real good look at your checkbook. Today we might have to talk about your computer financial program, but the idea is to look at what is there category by category and see the patterns in your life. Where exactly does your money go? And then you ask the question as you look at the patterns: “Does this reflect the fact that I believe Jesus is God?” Seriously, if the bar bill is greater than the church offering, what does that say? Because the truth of the matter is that sometimes our mouths can confess things but what we say is not what we really do?

Well, I think you can grasp that this sermon is about confessions, about what is in our heart especially when it comes down to Jesus. Our theme will be: **WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?**

What I think is important to grasp when it comes to this text is the general history behind it. Jesus has been involved in his ministry for about 2 and a half years at this point. He has had a great first year of support, which grew into a year of popularity but unfortunately that popularity is fading away. Typically the third year of Jesus ministry is known as “the year of opposition” because the Jewish leadership has been managing to get people to abandon Jesus as a false prophet and teacher. They did this because Jesus did not fit what they thought the Messiah should be, a worldly ruler who would use them as the heart and core of his kingdom. Jesus has basically called the leadership **“whitewashed tombs”** and **“a brood of vipers.”** So they hated Jesus and what He was about and did everything they could in every way they could to undermine and destroy Jesus.

This question of Jesus is basically asked of his disciples right around the beginning of the year of opposition. It gives us insight as to what the people were thinking (no doubt very guided by the Jewish leadership) and into what the disciples thought. Remember that the disciples spend almost their entire time with Jesus. I am pretty sure that if there were anything, anything at all, that would or could dampen the truth of what they confess about Jesus these men would know. So we can grasp that these men, in the voice of Peter, make this confession about Jesus without any reservations at all! They believe what they say! And what you also might want to grasp is that from this point Jesus begins spending time preparing the disciples for the events of the Passion. How he will be arrested, tried, suffer and die on the cross only to rise again from the dead! I believe it is as Jesus is teaching these truths that Judas turns his heart away. So yep, at this point, all the disciples agree!

What do they say of Jesus what do they agree to? **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Do you grasp the import of those words? Does the import of those words impact your life? They should! Because the importance of these words is still what forms the heart and core of the Christian faith. Deny anything that these words speak to and you may find that you are not really a believer in Jesus as the Bible proclaims him. And once you begin changing the Bible you are changing Jesus to a false god. So, let’s clearly grasp what is said here,

**“You are the Christ!”** Please note that this proclamation is made by men who have been raised Jewish, who have been immersed in the Old Testament and what the Old Testament was about. If there is one thing the Jewish people did grasp, it is the Old Testament teachings and promises concerning the Messiah, the Christ of God! So when these men proclaim, confess, admit that they know that Jesus is the Christ this means something. It means they know for a fact that Jesus is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament promised concerning the Messiah. Now for those of you who do not think that the Old Testament has any bearing on the life and work of Jesus, please pay attention to this fact. Because this confession says that they have weighed and measured Jesus by the revelations of the Old Testament and he fit the bill.

If you would, let me just take a quick moment to address another important issue here that has great bearing on other things I will say. This confession clearly states: **“You are.”** Not you appear to be, you seem like, you are close, you could be, or anything else that would suggest the verdict is still out. This is a definitive **“are!”** You ARE! That’s why when I spoke earlier I don’t say they believe this or that they hope this or anything short of the fact that they know this fact to be a truth in Jesus! They have experienced this fact. They are witnesses of this truth. They can tell you point blank because of the time spent with him, because of what they have heard and seen that Jesus IS the Christ of God. This is not a guess about Jesus. This is an absolute statement of fact that these disciples, based on God’s Old Testament, have come to know about Jesus! You ARE the Christ!

So what is this Christ? You actually know many things that pertain to the Christ, the Messiah of God. You know he would be born supernaturally of a virgin, a descendant of Abraham, the son of David and yet David’s Lord. He would be the sin bearer, the propitiation, the mediator of the mercy of God. He would be the bearer of righteousness, the Holy One, the Lamb to be slaughtered on account of the wrath and anger of God. The Christ would be the revealer of God, the Light of the world, the one to die and yet the one who would live forever. He would be God’s prophet, his priest and his eternal king. He would be hated without cause, put to death with sinners, have his hands and feet pierced, and buried with the rich. Most important, everything connected to salvation, grace, redemption, righteousness, perfection, love and God’s mercy is found, seen, and realized only in Him. He is the Christ, the promised one, the anointed One of God!

Dear people, those are just some of the more obvious things that the Old Testament reveals, promises and testifies about when it comes to God’s plan and method of salvation. In truth, any minor scholar of what the Old Testament says concerning the Messiah should be able to identify all of these promises. Some say there are about 350 promises directly pointing to the Christ but I say there are more, because the testimony of God’s Holy Spirit is that the entire Scriptures of God are about the Christ and what He will do an accomplish.

So, I want you to grasp that if you are going to proclaim Jesus the Christ, then recognize that to do so includes the entire Old Testament: its laws, promises, and history. That’s why I do not think you can say you are a Christian and yet ignore or despise what God’s law reveals about sin, death and the devil. Because all of this is connected in the Christ! And that Christ is Jesus.

Please note that this is not all that is said. As Peter speaks for the disciples, do you see how he makes sure to put in a qualifying statement that literally seals shut the door against those who will not believe? Because our full statement of faith says: **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”**

This Christ is now fully and accurately defined. He is the Son of God, the living God. Not a god of our imagination or a god that we can manipulate and maneuver but rather the true and living God. The God who created the world and who has of his mercy revealed his plan of salvation in his Holy Bible. This living God, this eternal being of power and majesty galore, gave promises about his Messiah and then made sure that every one of those promises came absolutely true. They are true in Jesus. Because Jesus is of God, the living God. Jesus is the Son of God.

That means that Jesus is divine. He is of the nature of his Father. He is the revelation of his Father, the exact representation of his being in human form. What the Father is, so is the Son. The Father is almighty, eternal, all knowing, unchangeable, righteous, just and incapable of anything that is false. The same is now true of the Son. Jesus is the Son of the Living God.

In this regard, I want to draw your attention to how Jesus responds to this confession about him. He says, **“This was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”** Do you grasp that with those words Jesus affirms the truth of what is said! God is His Father! The God who dwells in the heavens, the living God is my father. Please, just grasp the simple and awesome marvel that this confession of Jesus is! Now, either Jesus is totally delusional and psychotic which means there is no reason for any of us to pay attention to him or He is what he says and there is never any reason to NOT pay attention to Him!

It is true, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He came to fulfill the promises of his Father. He came to live perfectly for us, to suffer the pangs of eternal damnation on the cross in order to pay for our sins. He came to be our Savior, yep, the Christ of God.

Now, you can ignore this Christ if you want to. You can pretend he does not have the power and majesty of God that he is not the very revelation and Word of God, that he is unclear and wishy-washy in what He and His Father sent the Holy Spirit to give us. You can do what you want. But recognize that I will simply say this: Jesus is the Son of the Living God. He is not someone you can mold and shape to what you want, but rather is someone you had better grasp you need to hear that He might mold and shape you to what He wants. He is the Christ. I pray you grasp the total marvel this truth is! Amen.