

STONE HARBOR

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at johnny@stoneharborchurch.org.

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherds heart,
Johnny

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

Date: November 15, 2009
 Series: Who Jesus Is & Why He Matters
 Section: Jesus on Mission in Jerusalem
 Topic: The Passion
 Message Title: Identities: Understanding Jesus, Peter & Ourselves
 Short Title: Jesus, Peter & Ourselves
 Text: Mark 14:43-72
 Key Words: Betray, kiss, Are You the Christ?, I am, Peter, he denied it

Message Outline

Identities: Understanding Jesus, Peter & Ourselves

- I. Jesus admitted His identity
- II. Peter denied his identity
- III. What will you admit or deny about your identity?

Related Scripture

1. Mark 14:43-72
2. Mat 26:47-75
3. Luke 22: 47-71
4. John 18:2-27
5. Exodus 3 (esp. v. 14)

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Who does Jesus declare Himself to be in this passage?
2. What does that mean?
3. Who is Peter in relation to Jesus?
4. Who does Peter deny being and what does that say about his ability to stay true to who he is?
5. What might the juxtaposition of Jesus' admission of his identity on the one hand and Peter's denial of his on the other say about their respective identities and their abilities to be those people?
6. In what way does Peter represent an accurate understanding of all disciples even yourself?
7. In the light of Peter's weakness and failure, what hope is there for you to stand firm and live out your identity as a disciple of Jesus?

Memory and Meditation Verse

"Are you the Christ...?"

"Jesus said, "I am..."

From Mark 14:61-62 NASB

Exegetical Idea

This passage further discloses and contrasts Jesus' identity as the Christ able to redeem and Peter's identity as a well intentioned but fallible disciple in need of redemption.

Homiletical Idea

Jesus is the Christ able to redeem, and we are His disciples in need of His redemption.

Goals of Message

To understand the greatness and power of Jesus as contrasted to our own smallness and weakness
To appreciate and rely on Him and His grace all the more

Identities: Understanding Jesus, Peter and Ourselves

I. Jesus admitted His identity

The High Priest asked, “Are You the Christ the Son of the Blessed One (v. 61)?” and Jesus said, “I am...” Lane sees this simply as an affirming answer and not a direct proclamation of the “I am” of Yahweh in Exodus.

⁶²And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see ^(A)THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and ^(B)COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

A. He allowed Himself to be harmed by admitting His identity

The outcome of Jesus admission would be that He would be spit upon, blindfolded and struck, mocked, ... but most significantly that the Council would condemn Him to deathⁱ (63-35). We will read those verses again in just a little bit.

B. Who is Jesus?

1. He admits here that He is the Christ

2. He is the Son of the Blessed One, i.e., the Son of God

By answering the high priest’s direct question with, “I am” Jesus admits that He is the Christ. Then, with two references to passages the Council members would have recognized as messianic, He supports His messianic claim. The manner He does so implies that though they don’t recognize Him as the Messiah now, when He comes in His glory there will be no such failure to recognize Him.

3. He is the Son of Man who would:

a) Soon sit at the right hand of Power (enthronement)

(1) *Psalm 110:1*

¹The LORD says to my Lord:
"Sit at My right hand
Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

(2) *“Power” referred to God!*ⁱⁱ

*(3) To be seated at the right hand of God indicated the highest honor, honor fitting the Messiah*ⁱⁱⁱ

b) Eventually come with the clouds of heaven (parousia)

(1) *Dan 7:13*

¹³I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a ^(A)Son of Man was coming,

And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.

(2) Mark 8:38 & 13:26 – Coming in Glory (2nd Coming = Parousia)

c) “warning that He will be vindicated in glory”^{iv}

The overall theme of the gospel of Mark and very overtly here is “Who Jesus Is”; and here he is presented in no uncertain terms and by His own admission as the Christ, suffering servant now coming in glory later.

C. What it means to be the Christ

1. Definition of the Word Christ

a) Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah

b) Messiah means “the anointed One”

c) The one God would use to deliver His people from bondage and restore them to Himself.

Trans. -- This term had been applied to the Persian king Cyrus who God used to deliver the people of Israel from their captivity in Babylon and restore a remnant to Jerusalem, but there was a much broader expectation in the OT of a Messiah who would come to bring about the redemption and restoration that was the central topic of Scripture.

2. Meaning of the Christ from God’s Revelation

a) The seed of the woman of Gen 3:15

(1) who would reverse the curse

b) The seed of Abraham of Gen 12:3

(1) who would mediate the knowledge of God to the whole world

c) The Royal Son of David from 2 Sam 7

(1) who would rule forever over the Kingdom of God

d) Priest in the order of Melchezidek

e) Immanuel of Is 6-12

(1) who would be God with us

f) Yahweh’s Servant of Is

(1) Who is both the true Israel and God Himself

g) The Focal Point of Jewish Hope

(1) Yet they hoped for a Messiah of their own making – One according to how they wanted to regard the Scriptures not according to what God had actually revealed in the Scriptures.

h) God's Redeemer Soon to Redeem

TRANS. -- This unimpressive carpenter's son from Galilee stood before the leaders of Israel and admitted He was the Christ. They were looking for testimony that would condemn Him to death, and He Himself handed it to them. This is but one of many ironies being played out. Jesus, the ultimate priest, was being challenged by the sub-ultimate priests who were failing to recognize and submit to the very God they were supposed to represent. These priests were unwittingly serving in their last valid priestly role of slaying the ultimate Passover lamb. They called Jesus admission blasphemy^v (dishonoring speech against God). But it was their declaration that Jesus was blasphemous that was the true blasphemy, for Jesus spoke the truth of who He was while they spoke and demonstrated their protests against that truth. Read 63-65. He had prayed in the garden that God's will would be done even if it required great personal cost and that will was now taking place at that cost. Jesus was being the man that God had designed all mankind to be, His devoted Son, even unto death, for the love of His father, no cost too great... The text demands our appreciation of Jesus. And then there is Peter. Where Jesus admitted His identity...

II. Peter denied his identity

Let's look at the end of the story for today. Read 66-72. In stark contrast to Jesus...

A. Peter prevented himself from being harmed by denying his identity

These two scenes had played out at the same time. While Jesus was admitting that He was the Christ and thereby putting Himself in harms way, Peter was saving himself from harm by denying that he had any sort of relationship with Jesus and certainly he wasn't His disciple.

There is a harm escaped that a one wishes he had not. And certainly at the conclusion of Peter's 3 fold denial his remorse weighed heavy. I wonder how many times Peter looked back and wished he had admitted that he was a disciple, even if it had cost him his life.

B. Who was Peter?

1. He was a disciple of Jesus

a) What is a Disciple of Jesus?

(1) One who Shares His life with Jesus

(2) One who Follows Jesus' Leadership

(3) One who Learns from Him

(4) One who Obeys Him

b) Peter was Jesus' disciple from the very start of His ministry*(1) John 1***c) Peter seemed to be in Jesus inner circle***(1) Frequently Peter was the spokesman for the others**(2) Invited to walk to Jesus on the water**(3) Invited to the mount of transfiguration**(4) Invited to keep watch in the Garden of Gethsemane***d) He Was a Confident and Committed Disciple***(1) Had declared his understanding of Jesus as the Christ***(a) Peter's Confession of Christ**

(i) Mark 8

²⁷Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?"

²⁸They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." ²⁹And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "**You are the Christ.**"

*(2) He stuck with Jesus when others deserted***(a) John 6**

⁵¹^(BZ)I am the living bread that ^(CA)came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, ^(CB)he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give ^(CC)for the life of the world is ^(CD)My flesh."

⁶⁷So Jesus said to ^(A)the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" ⁶⁸^(B)Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have ^(C)words of eternal life. ⁶⁹"We have believed and have come to know that You are ^(D)the Holy One of God."

(b) Mark 14

(i) Peter drew the sword to protect Jesus

(ii) Peter followed Jesus right into the very court of the authorities who arrested him

(3) He saw and declared himself as a more committed disciple than his fellow disciples

(a) Mark 14:29

- (i) ²⁹But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not."

(4) He saw and declared himself willing even to die for Jesus, 31

(a) Mark 14:31a

- (i) ³¹But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"...

Trans – For all of these positive characteristics of Peter we also see that he was...

e) A Failed Disciple

(1) He failed to recognize Jesus' mission as suffering servant thereby putting his definition of the Christ's role above Jesus own self definition

(a) Mark 8:31

³¹And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

(b) Mark 8:32-33

³²And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. "But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

(2) He failed in the garden falling asleep 3 times

(a) Mark 14:37, 40, 41

(3) Failed in the high priest's court denying that he was His disciple 3 times

(a) Mark 14:66-72

f) Yet He was a Disciple Jesus Continued to Include as One of His Own

(1) Even after his failure (42)

g) For, He was a Disciple About to be redeemed and then restored by Jesus

(1) Redeemed on the Cross

(2) Restored by the sea of Galilee 16:7

C. What it means to be Peter – Walk in his shoes a bit

1. Peter after these events would have been convinced of Christ's rightness and nobility

a) Rightness

Peter would have had to admit that Jesus was right – he had fallen away, he did even deny Him.

b) Nobility

Jesus was true to His God and His calling, He did not avoid the betrayal, the arrest, and declaring truthfully who He was even under imminent danger of harm

2. Peter would have been convinced of his wrongness and commonness

a) Wrongness

Peter would have had to admit that he was wrong – he had not, after all, been able to stand firm, he had not been able to remain faithful to Jesus when it came down to costing him his safety.

b) Commonness

Peter would have had to admit that even though he had felt a strong confidence in his devotion to Jesus and had even regarded his faith and commitment stronger than the other disciples, he was, in the end no better. He was just one of the disciples who all fell away.

3. Peter was the spokesmen for Jesus disciples

a) He often spoke for them

b) He represents all disciples -- Including Us!

(1) In Peter We See Ourselves

(a) Positive – Well intentioned, but

(b) Negative – Fallible, Fallen, Failures

Having learned of Jesus and Peter by looking at their lives and identify with Peter, let's spend the rest of the time addressing what Jesus would have us know about our lives based on these truths.

III. What will you admit or deny about your Identity?

This passage stirs in me the desire to be like Christ and not like Peter. To stand with Jesus, faithful to God's calling on my life no matter what!

Yet it also informs me that on my own I am just like Peter, probably not even as good as Peter, and certainly not like Christ. When push comes to shove and my faith requires my harm what will I admit or deny about my identity as a disciple of Jesus?

I have a hunch that faith under stress surfaces/exposes the true nature of our faith. If that faith proves non-faith under stress then it was only non-faith disguised as faith all along. You might have fooled others, you might have even fooled yourself, but threat of harm and loss removes non-faith's disguise.

Few want to live a lie (non-faith masquerading as faith). Even less think they are living the lie. More probably do live not knowing whether their faith is a lie or not. Peter thought himself a disciple of Jesus unto death. Yet, Peter under threat of harm discovered that his faith was non-faith.

If the story ended there we would all be left in despair and hopelessness. If Peter couldn't do it after living with Jesus for 3 years and seeing first hand his miracles and hearing with his own ears His teaching... If Peter couldn't stand with Jesus, then what makes me think I can?

Jesus did not bring Peter along this path of understanding to leave him a faithless so called disciple. The way I've got it figured He simply had to bring Peter to the end of himself and his unfounded overconfidence in himself before Peter could learn **the greatness of Jesus** and **the degree of his need for Him**.

Jesus was greater than Peter thought and different than Peter thought. Jesus was not one to be rebuked when Peter disagreed as he had done when Jesus predicted His suffering and death (Mk 8). He was not one to be argued against when He said all would fall away and even Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed a second time (Mk 14). Peter had to learn that you don't push back on Jesus like you do other men. He was greater than that! He was the Son of God and His plans were greater than what Peter had understood them to be. What He said came true even when Peter disagreed. Peter at this time may have begun to recall Jesus words regarding His suffering and death that he had three times shared but that Peter seems to have three times not received. Peter may have begun with Jesus' arrest and his failure begun to put together what later became clear to him that Jesus was the Redeemer not of the Jews from Roman political rule but of the world from sin – from the results of the fall which forced all men to live separated from God no matter how many religious deeds they did or how much better they were or thought they were than others.

Peter needed and may now have begun to be receptive to the redemption Jesus came to secure – the God provided solution to the problem of man's estrangement. Up until this time, Peter had Jesus pegged to be the Christ of popular definition -- the Christ who would kick out the Roman bums and set up a Jewish Kingdom under God as in the days of the great king David. But Jesus was not the Christ of Peter's definition, He was the Christ of God's definition. Peter was now aware that he could bring nothing to the

table that Jesus needed, but rather that he needed something only Jesus had – he needed Jesus’ forgiveness for his own unfaithfulness.

Recognizing Jesus’ greatness and provision and his own weakness and need Peter was in a fragile but good place. He was poised to receive Jesus for who He really was (not who he wanted him to be), and to listen and receive what He said to be true (not just accepting what He said that passed the filter of what he wanted to hear), in short, he was poised to be a disciple of Jesus according to Jesus, not a disciple of Jesus according to Peter.

His faith was tested and found wanting. But when Peter understood it to be lacking, he was poised to have Jesus rebuild it. And rebuild it He did. That is a story for another day. Suffice it to say that Jesus, even after such complete proof of Peter’s failure, continued to include him and he intentionally restored him and even commissioned him to be a leader and feeder of His sheep. But Peter would do so not as the big man who brought his superior strengths to give Jesus a hand, but as the sinner redeemed by Jesus who alone in all of history stands as faithful.

I want to be like Jesus and not like Peter, but I’m afraid on my own I’m more like Peter than I am like Jesus. I hope you want to be more like Jesus than Peter as well and I hope that you realize that you have it in your natural flesh to be just like Peter and you don’t have it in your natural flesh to be like Christ.

What we need to do is learn Peter’s lesson by leaning into God’s word and the truth of this passage so we don’t have to learn the lesson in the school of personal experience. Peter had to come to the end of Himself and the beginning of Jesus according to Jesus. We need to do the same thing. We need to do it when we come to Jesus the first time and when we come to Jesus after walking with him for years.

Jesus is not who you think He is. I’m sure you are partly right about Him, but that means you are partly wrong. In as much as you haven’t fully apprehended who Jesus is, don’t you want to know Him more? I hope you do. I hope you want to spend your life knowing Him more and more, enjoying Him more and more fully, recognizing His voice more and more clearly, doing His will more and more completely... Would you please cultivate in your heart the humble attitude of a learner and would you pay careful attention to the Word of God daily sitting at the feet of Jesus. Daily with Bible open as, what more do you have for me, Lord Jesus.

You may not be who you think you are. If there is a chance you may be a Peter: confident, thinking your faith is stronger and your commitment more true than the other disciples of Jesus on your right and left, then receive the Spirit’s nudge toward humility and recognition of your need for Jesus, first for redemption and then for ongoing transformation. You may not be the spiritual giant that you think. But that’s alright, Jesus extends His grace to you anyway. Know your propensity towards “Peterness” (overconfidence in your own abilities); save Jesus the trouble and humble yourself.

Take this journey now. If we note who Jesus is (God’s faithful Christ) and who we are apart from His redeeming grace (faithless Peter-likes), and who we are in Christ (Spirit-filled empowered disciples in union with Jesus) then we will be prepared to follow Him as true disciples exercising true faith.

Let’s Pray!

Prayer: lay down and let go of the Jesus or our own making and accept the Christ of God’s provision.

Endnotes

ⁱ Lev 24:15-16

ⁱⁱ ““Power” was a recognized circumlocution for God.” Lane p. 537

ⁱⁱⁱ “to sit at the right hand of” someone was a familiar idiom meaning to occupy the place of highest honor” Lane p. 537

^{iv} Hurtado p. 249

^v Lane p. 538 – “Applied to God it meant to dishonor him by diminishing his majesty or depriving him of the rights to which he is entitled (cf.2:7)” Mark 2:7 after Jesus pronounced forgiveness of the paralytic some of the scribes objected saying, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?”

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