

"Good Question"

Exodus 18:-2:10, Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20

August 27, 2017

Exodus 1:8-2:10

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. {9} He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. {10} Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land

{22} Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live." {2:1} Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. {2} The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. {3} When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. {4} His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. {5} The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. {6} When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him, "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. {7} Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" {8} Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. {9} Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. {10} When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. {2} Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect. {3} For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. {4} For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, {5} so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. {6} We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; {7} ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; {8} the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Matthew 16:13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" {14} And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." {15} He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" {16} Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." {17} And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. {18} And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. {19} I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." {20} Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

After spending about three years with the disciples, who are children in faith terms, as Jesus' ministry was moving toward its goal he decides to find out if those who are closest to him have any notion about who he really is. Oh, they know the basic stuff, son of Mary and Joseph, raised as a carpenter in Nazareth, man of compelling call, man of miraculous abilities, great story teller, rabbi – teacher like none other...but who was he....really? So he asks, “Hey guys, who do people say that I am?” The first response is kind of like, well some folks think you are a lot like, or you resemble, or you sure act like. Kind of like when the new baby is shown to grandma for the first time and she says, ‘he sure likes like your great uncle Max,’ or when at 12 you have the same English teacher your older brother had four years ago and she says something you probably don't want to hear, ‘you are just like your brother Joe.’” The disciples say, ‘some say like your cousin John, or maybe Elijah, maybe Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.’ Kind of like, people know your name, people know you are special, people know you do miracles and feed people and heal them. You must be somebody, we know cause of the things you do.

And that's well and good. But Jesus knows that in order to be more, in order to be people of true faith, in order to really be the church, in order to be equipped to deal with all sorts of life situations, in order to have knowledge of someone you can really depend on when things get chaotic and confusing and life threatening – you need to know more, so he asks again, a little differently, “Ok, I hear you, but who do YOU say that I am?” Peter in a moment of great insight, says, “You are the one... you are the Messiah.....the Son of the living God.” Even for Jesus, who is and was

all those things, it must have been gratifying to be recognized for who he truly he was.

How happy Jesus must have been at this moment to hear this confession from Peter. Petros, the rock. Jesus tells the disciples not to let on about who he is to anyone else, that will come later, for now it is enough to know that they realize who he is. There is still more to learn, still more to do. They have to keep the distractions to a minimum.

Most of us, who during the course of our lives have heard about, been taught about and have experienced the person and nature of Jesus might find ourselves at a point in our lives at which we can say, maybe even publicly, "yes, I know who he is. He is my Lord and my God. He loves me and I love him." We'd probably do o.k. if we were quizzed about him. We'd probably be able to give the Sunday School answer about who Jesus is. Friend, brother, savior, maybe even have some idea about him being the Son of the living God, the Messiah.

Most of us would be able to, if somewhat hesitantly be able to declare our knowledge of Christ and acknowledge his presence in our lives. Here in this place, in word and song and in deed we readily declare with our lips that Jesus is our Lord. But what about out there?

When the cost of our discipleship is laid out before us, when it becomes evident that along with this knowledge, along with this faith there is the demand for sacrifice, that it's not enough just to be able to say who he is, do we know then, who he truly is?

Here's this great story, a Sunday School and LOGOS story of Moses in the

bulrushes. Of Moses being saved by some pretty sharp thinking on his mother's part in the face of the brutal policy of Pharaoh to have all first born Hebrew boy babies killed. It's a not so sweet story told for our children's sake in a sweet way. But it's not the whole story. The whole story is about this Hebrew boy growing up in an Egyptian palace so that one day, far in the future he can be called by God to deliver his real people, God's people from slavery. The entire book of Exodus is all about this amazing adventure. But do we know who he is? This Moses. Do we know that without what Moses accomplishes there is no story of a baby born in a stable in 'o little town of bethlehem' who escapes another tyrant who wants to kill him by being whisk off to, wait for it, Egypt? That without Moses there is no confession of a fisherman named Peter who becomes 'the rock.'

Paul knew. And in Romans he encounters a church that readily confesses Christ as Lord, that claims knowledge of him as Savior. But Paul knows that this is not the whole story. It is not the complete picture of our faith. Along with 'knowing the story' along with our belief -- there must be commitment, and that commitment may mean sacrifice. Paul says:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect."

As Christians we are called to not conform to the world, and that has to mean

more than the fact that while most of the world is at brunch, or playing golf, or out on the boat, or sleeping in that we are here. Our worship should be a sign that what we do as we gather on Sunday mornings for some prayers and songs and a sermon is an indication of how we live our lives. We declare in worship that we know Jesus, that we know who he is. But our worship does not stop there. Our true spiritual worship is our willingness to give ourselves up to the call of Christ, to the sacrifice of living for him. It's only part of the plan to be nonconformist on Sundays, as followers of Jesus we are called, not to be bound by what we hear and see in the world around us, we are called not to allow what the world says to be our guide even when the world claims to speak with "Christian" values. We're called to be more willing to do what Jesus did than to accept what others tell us Jesus was all about. There are many who claim to know Jesus, who with the world, believe that Jesus would condone the continued use of force and violence as an answer to domestic conflict; there are those who think Jesus would condone the killing of innocents because innocents are being killed; there are those think that because Jesus loves them that Jesus condones living in a way that inhibits or prohibits another from living at all. There are those who say they 'know' Jesus who don't know Jesus at all. To know Jesus is to be transformed by who Jesus is. Who Jesus really is.

We know Jesus don't we? If Jesus strolls up to us and asks us that really good question, "Who do YOU say that I am?" What's our answer. Peter knew because he was in the third year of intensive intro to Jesus course. How do we know? Here is the bottom line. And it only happens in two places. In your homes and in the church.

And it only happens in your home because of what you get here in the church. And it is something your children can not and will not get in school because it is as personal as it is important. If children of God are tested on any level at any time and in any situation and need to know who and whose they are, we must provide the answer. And it must be learned. Who are you? I am a child of the living, unchanging, God of unconditional love, a member of the body of Christ.