

WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS?

If I were to ask you, “Who is Jesus Christ?” what would your answer be?

Would you be able to respond to that question without hesitating, hemming and hawing?

Have you ever sat down and really focused your mind on trying to figure out who Jesus is?

After all, you’re a Christian, and Christians follow Jesus. But do you know who you are following?

And if so, how well do you know him?

Don’t you want to know everything you can about this mystifying Jewish rabbi who lived in Palestine 2000 years ago?

Don’t you want to have your questions about Jesus answered?

Is he really God’s Son?

Is he actually the Messiah?

Is he truly the way, the truth and the life, and nobody comes to the Heavenly Father except through him?

Maybe you’re thinking, “It doesn’t really make a difference who Jesus is to me. As long as I try to get along with my neighbor; as long as I make it to church once in a while; as long as I’m not a serial killer or pedophile or an evil human being, I’m home free and it doesn’t matter who Jesus is. I don’t need to know.”

But it does matter, and you really should know.

Because it makes a big difference whether you're following an ordinary man or a madman or a con man or the Son of Man.

Jesus could be any of those kinds of men.

Is one of those kinds of Jesus your Jesus, the Jesus you follow?

Who do you say Jesus is?

When Jesus walked the earth, he was many things to many people.

To the sick and demon possessed, he was a healer.

To the poor, he was an advocate who stood up for them and spoke on their behalf.

To women, he was a liberator who lifted them up from second class status, valued them as much as he valued men, and treated them with dignity and respect.

To those who were drowning in their sin and guilt and feared God's judgment, he was a Savior.

To those who feared death, he was a victor, a conqueror who took away death's sting by being resurrected from it.

They all knew who Jesus was, and they loved him.

Of course, the rich and powerful also knew who Jesus was: he was bad news.

To the keepers of the law, the Pharisees and Scribes, he was a lawbreaker who encouraged others to disobey God's commandments that Moses had passed down centuries before.

To the wealthy and privileged, he was a threat whose talk of the last being first and the first last, and how gaining the whole world would cause you to lose your soul, put them in a negative light.

To the Romans he was a troublemaker whose supporters treated him like a king; and that kind of support is reserved for Caesar alone.

All of them also knew who Jesus was, and they feared and despised him.

I guess you could say that to know Jesus is to either love him or hate him.

Who do you say Jesus is?

In a book by Max Lucado called *God's Promises for You*, he had a reflection entitled, *Jesus, Our Hope*.

The one to whom we pray knows our feelings.

He knows temptation.

He has felt discouraged.

He has been hungry and sleepy and tired.

He knows what we feel like when the alarm clock goes off.

He knows what we feel when our children want different things at the same time.

He nods in understanding when we pray in anger.

He is touched with compassion when we tell him we have more to do than can ever be done.

He smiles when we confess our weariness.

You see, Jesus was human, like us.

And he wants us to know that he, too, knew the drone of the humdrum and the weariness that comes with long days.

He wants us to remember that he, our trailblazer, didn't wear a bullet-proof vest or rubber gloves or an impenetrable suit of armor.

No, Jesus pioneered our salvation while facing the same challenging and treacherous world that you and I face daily.

He became flesh and dwelt among us.

That's who Jesus is to Max Lucado.

What about you? Who do you say Jesus was?

We need to know who Jesus is because so much of us depends so much on him.

Our brokenness, our grief, our loss, our lostness and our despair are riding on his identity.

But it goes without saying that before we place our trust, our faith in Jesus, we should first be able to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"

If we're going to bet all our money and our whole eternity on one horse, we need to know as much as we can about that horse. That's the wise and appropriate thing to do.

And we need Jesus if we're ever going to make it out of this mortal life and enter into Eternal Life. Because we can't do that ourselves. We might as well try to pole vault to the moon.

As finite, mortal human beings, we don't have what it takes to save ourselves; or to heal our spiritual condition; or to raise ourselves from the dead, open heaven's gate and walk through it.

Our only hope is that Jesus will do that for us—if in fact Jesus is who he says he is.

The only way we can attain everlasting life is if the Jesus of the Gospels is the genuine article, the real thing, and God really did send him into our world of hurt and helplessness.

And if Jesus is who he says he is, then the only thing we need to do is simply take him at his word.

I wish we would take him at his word. And I pray that we will.

Because if we do, our lives will be totally transformed.

If Jesus is who he says he is and we believe him, then when he tells us we're forgiven, we can unload our guilt.

And when he tells us we're valuable, we can let go of our self-loathing and feelings of worthlessness and stop mentally flagellating ourselves.

And when he tells us we're destined for Eternal Life, we can bury our fear of death and start genuinely living our life.

And when he tells us that we're provided for, like the birds of the air who neither reap nor sow, we can stop frantically trying to gain the whole world at the risk of forfeiting our souls.

And when he tells us to take up our cross and follow him, we can pick it up without hesitation and carry it, trusting that when we lose our life for him and for the Gospel, we will actually save it.

But only if he truly is the Messiah.

So, who do you say Jesus is?

If you don't know, isn't it time to find out? Amen.