

**Kingdom**  
**February 25, 2024**

**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church**

**Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

If someone came up to you and asked you, *who is Jesus?* How would you respond? What would you say? Would your response depend on the context? Or who it was that was asking...a total stranger, a neighbor, a friend, or a family member? What would you say? Before you answer that, hold that thought for a moment.

This morning, we are continuing our sermon series during the season of Lent, entitled, "Christ For You." As Pastor John shared with us last week, we are doing this through the lens of law and gospel. And what is law and gospel? It is how God not only shows us our sins, but how God shows us our Savior. Because it is through the lens of law and the gospel together, that we can clearly see and understand His Word through Scripture, how God calls us to be His own, and more importantly, how He calls us back to Himself time and time again.

Before we get into our Gospel reading for this morning, I want to give you a little context. Jesus is in his third year of public ministry. He and His disciples had spent a lot of time ministering around the sea of Galilee. People were becoming familiar with His ministry and how He was FOR THEM because they had heard how Jesus healed people in need of healing, how He had fed thousands of people with only seven loaves of bread and a few small fish, and how, even the religious leaders of the day, began to ask Him for a sign, to see if Jesus really was from God.

Jesus and His disciples then went on to travel some 25 miles outside of the area where He was ministering. They went from Bethsaida, the northern city along the Sea of Galilee, to the region of Caesarea Philippi, the most northern city of Galilee. And it was there that Jesus asked, “Who do people say that I am?” (v.27). His disciples said that people thought that He was “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah [the Old Testament prophet]; and others, one of the prophets.” (v.28). And while Jesus was a prophet, He is also so much more. So, He asks them, “But who do YOU say that I am?” And that is when Peter said, “You are the Christ!” (v.29).

It was the first time that one of His disciples correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah, God’s Anointed One, the One for whom the Jewish people had prayed, longed, and hoped would come for centuries. And even though they had suffered through the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and now, the Romans, throughout it all, they still hoped that God would send someone like King David in the Old Testament who would lead them to defeat their oppressors and reestablish the Kingdom of Israel.

But instead of praising Peter for getting it right, Jesus warned His disciples not to tell anyone because He had yet to suffer many things—to be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and to be killed. And after three days, He would rise again (v.31).

That is when Peter took Jesus aside and began to correct Him. Suffering and dying? Did not Jesus know what the Messiah was supposed to do? If He suffered and died, how would He be able to overcome their oppressors? How would He reestablish the Kingdom? But after Jesus turned and saw His disciples, He corrected Peter, saying, “Get behind me Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but the things of man” (v. 33).

And so, while originally, Peter got it right when he said that Jesus was the Christ, he also got it wrong because even though He knew the stories of

what the Messiah was expected to do, he allowed his pride and ego to get in the way of God's plan and purpose, just like how each one of us does from time to time when we allow our pride and ego to reign supreme in our lives. When they form the basis of the words that we speak to one another, causing hurt and pain, when our own way is always more important than God's plan and purpose, when we allow our pride and ego to become our king—like Jesus shares with Peter—we are not setting our minds on the things of God, but on the things of man.

But Jesus is FOR Us, so He goes on in Mark's Gospel to take on the role of a suffering servant. Willingly He takes your sins, my sins, and the sins of the whole world, upon Himself that He might die on the cross with them—FOR US, that we might have the forgiveness that comes from God Himself, for all those sinful words and actions full of pride and ego—either known or unknown—that go against God's plan and purpose. And as He does so, we see His Kingdom more fully, because after three days, victoriously He rises again over sin, death, and the devil.

You see, His Kingdom is for you. And while no one can truly follow after Him, in our Gospel reading, before He does so, He called the crowd with His disciples and said to them,

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. (vv.34-35)

This is the challenge that Jesus sets before us. He calls each of us to be part of His Kingdom, to let go of our selfish pride and ego, and to deny ourselves, that we might take up our cross and follow Him. And while nobody can truly follow after Him, He does give to us His Word and Spirit, that daily, we might turn from our ways, and submit our very lives to God's plan and purpose in humble service to Him. And when that happens,

by the grace of God, those around us come to learn and know that Jesus is for them as well.

So, let me ask you. If someone came up to you and asked you, who is Jesus? How would you respond? What would you say? Would your response depend on the context? Or who it was that was asking...a total stranger, a neighbor, a friend, or a family member? What would you say? I pray that you would say, *Jesus Christ is for me! He is my Lord and Savior, the Son of the Living God!*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.