

Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 13th Sunday After Pentecost - August 23, 2026

00:54

It's good to see you.

00:56

You made it in through the rain.

01:00

Not incidentally a prayer request from Pastor Kevin Powell who is spending his summer vacation

01:07

bailing out his basement because it's flooded yet again.

01:11

So maybe pray for extra strength and patience for him as he contends with that.

01:17

It sounds like this has been like the third maybe iteration of this for him.

01:22

So

01:24

That's not an easy thing

01:29

We also will ask for prayers for a neighbour to

01:34

Sharon's mom. His name is Kenny who was released from the hospital only to go immediately back

01:40

and I'm not sure if they totally know what's happening with him yet, but his

01:45

Condition is quite serious. So please think of him and pray for him today if you would

01:54

As we have gone through this season of Pentecost we have looked at how the life

of Jesus has something to say

02:02

for the life of the church and today is

02:05

One of those very pivotal moments in the life of the disciple community and perhaps the churches as well in that

02:13

Jesus asks the leveling question,

02:17

"Who do you say that I am?"

02:21

The church has inherited that question.

02:24

We'll wrestle with it and continue to wrestle with it,

02:27

but that is what is before us today in our Gospel reading.

02:36

(gentle music)

02:38

(soft music)

03:14

The Holy Gospel According to Saint Matthew, the 16th chapter, glory to you oh Lord.

03:23

Now when Jesus came to the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people

03:32

say the Son of Man is. And they said some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and

03:39

still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Then Jesus said to them, "But who

03:49

do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of

03:58

the living God. And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for

04:06

flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my father in heaven. And I tell

04:12

you, you are Peter. And on this rock I will build my church and the gates of

04:18

Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of

04:24

heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you

04:30

lose on earth will be loosed in heaven. And then he sternly ordered the

04:40

disciples not to tell anyone he was the Messiah. The gospel of our Lord.

04:50

Won't you be seated.

The Sermon

05:00

"Praise the peace to you."

05:04

You might remember a saying that goes along the lines of, "God created humanity in the

05:11

image of God and people have been trying to return the favor ever since."

05:19

It is true that we project our own experience

05:24

onto what we believe God to be

05:26

and what we believe Jesus to be.

05:32

Maybe some of that is inevitable,

05:36

some of it innocuous,

05:38

some of it, I think, dangerous and toxic.

05:43

There is a group in North America,

05:46

a large umbrella group that calls themselves

05:48

white Christian nationalists. I can tell by the look on some faces that you are

05:55

familiar with what this group stands for. Their God is white, their Jesus is white,

06:04

and for my money resembles the Terminator a lot more closely than resembles

06:09

Jesus.

06:13

Would it be really mean if I did a little stained glass window rant?

06:20

Well, I'll try to give it to you gently. You notice what color these personages

06:29

are? They don't have a lot of melanin in their skin. They look a lot like us and

06:38

part of that is to be forgiven because the artists, that's what they knew. That

06:43

they were trying to integrate this Jesus, this Palestinian, into their own experience.

06:53

We'll give them that. But the problem rapidly became that, at least in our part of the world,

07:01

the only representation of Jesus or disciples or people of faith were people who looked identical to us.

07:13

We've heard when there are artistic renderings of Jesus as actual Palestinian, as in some cases there are East Asian artists who are portraying people of faith through their lens.

07:32

I think we need all of those. And to insist on one, I think, is where the toxicity begins.

07:46

But we do need to regard what we say Jesus is with more than a dose of humility. Because sometimes

07:56

Jesus political leanings look a lot like our own whatever those leanings might be.

08:03

Or for some of us, we like Jesus walking on the waves but we don't like it when he

08:10

makes waves. When he, the Empire, when he takes on even people within his own

08:18

religion, when he takes on even...

08:27

I'm trying to decide how we'll transcribe this later, what the words in that fell out.

08:35

We are left with that question though.

08:40

They I am.

08:42

Peter gets the...

09:00

We'll try this one

09:02

This might be a little nicer than if I just holler at you, so you can hear me, okay?

09:07

Alright great

09:09

Simon Peters answer is correct, but incomplete

09:13

His understanding is incomplete

09:16

He and his followers if you trace those last days of Jesus

09:21

They show you that their understanding of Jesus as Messiah is this one who is

09:27

through means of force, whether it is the sword or some sort of military organizing,

09:32

going to be a Messiah that overturns the Roman Empire.

09:37

So it's not quite time for the disciples to say who they think Jesus is, not only in their verbiage,

09:44

but in their behavior.

09:48

Our understanding of who Jesus is is couched in death and resurrection.

09:54

I think we understand that. We think that it is grounded.

10:00

But even we have to be careful. And so when we ask ourselves things like, "Who do we say Jesus is?"

10:06

We are doing more than asking for people to

10:10

say it in the appropriate language or to use precise vocabulary.

10:15

We're really thinking about how it is that we act.

10:22

One thinks about baptism liturgies.

10:25

What do we say?

10:27

That we proclaim Christ in word and

10:31

deed.

10:32

And what does that look like especially if we hold that Christ is crucified and risen?

10:39

And what does that mean if we believe Jesus to be one who came to bless and save the world?

10:49

It might actually take us to the last story that Jesus tells in Matthew's gospel.

10:55

The sorting of the nations between sheep and goats.

11:03

I wanted to do my thing about why I like goats a lot, but let's just say that I do.

11:11

But what is the litmus test?

11:15

It's not the spoken word as much as it is how the least of these are treated.

11:21

Whether those are people who are poor,

11:24

who have nothing to wear, no place to live,

11:28

who are sick.

11:32

It's amazing how controversial

11:36

that point has become in Christianity in North America.

11:42

If we lean into that, we're accused of being woke.

11:46

Well, I think I'd rather be awake than asleep, thank you very much.

11:53

Who do we say Jesus is?

12:00

We say, like Simon Peter, that Jesus is God's beloved, God's chosen.

12:10

But how we answer has high stakes, just as it did for Simon Peter and for his companions.

12:21

And I think it has high stakes for two reasons.

12:24

The first is we as church living out with integrity who we believe Jesus is and

aspiring

12:35

to lean into that kind of mindset and way of being.

12:41

Or as it's written in the letter to the Philippians,

12:43

let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

12:48

Who?

12:51

Being found in human form took upon himself

12:53

the form of a servant.

12:59

Besides the notion of some internal integrity though,

13:06

How we proclaim Jesus in how we act has very powerful implications for the sake

13:16

of all of those for whom Jesus came and rescued and redeemed.

13:29

Who do we say Jesus is?

13:35

May we be given wisdom to answer carefully.

13:39

May we be given courage and gladness.

13:42

To live openly and courageously.

13:48

Amen.

