

Divine Disclosure Chair of St. Peter the Apostle Wednesday, February 22, 2017
8:15 AM 1 Pt 5:1-4; **Mt 16:13-19** (We cannot understand Jesus until we let the Father tell us who he is.)

“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

Now this expression, Son of Man, is a way of talking about oneself in the third person. So he is really saying, “Who do people say that I am?” but he is not saying it in so many words. **Son of Man is a term that’s found throughout Scripture with slightly different meanings.**

Sometimes it simply means somebody or it means I in the third person or it has a link to the very idea of the first man, Adam. **The evangelist, I think, wants all of these meanings to echo in our minds, in our imaginations.**

Now the point is that **Jesus is asking a question he knows doesn’t have a very good answer.** First of all he says, “What do people think?” Well, what do they have to think with? We have certain categories. Everyone is like this. **Human beings live with certain categories and we try to speak with those categories, but they are often inappropriate.** Reality is way more flexible and plastic and profound than our language. **So then when the question comes up, well, “Who do people think I am? and then they say, well, “Some say John the Baptist,”** where did they get that idea? They knew John was dead. They should realize that Jesus couldn’t be John the Baptist because even if there were such a thing as reincarnation, he was too old. They were almost the same age. So this is not a very good answer.

Elijah—well, now Elijah, according to legend was taken up in a whirlwind and was going to come back before the Messiah, so that’s possible. It’s possible, except that would mean Jesus is not the Messiah; he would be Elijah preparing the way for the Messiah. In another text Jesus says, “Elijah has indeed come,” meaning John the Baptist had already come preparing the way for him, so another potentially correct answer, but in this case wrong. So the first answer impossible, second one possibly correct, but not. Third one **Jeremiah!** Now was there any expectation at all that Jeremiah would ever return? Not to my knowledge. So this is really another out-of-the-box answer. **“Or one of the prophets”**—again, one of the prophets from the past it means returned—**very odd ideas.**

Now what Peter says is, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Now Christ means Messiah. If you will recall, in another text when Peter says, “You are the Christ,” Jesus says, “You must not tell that to anyone.” **The word Messiah is very problematic, because the expectations that the word, the category, of Messiah carried, Jesus did not actually fulfill.** He was different. He was not your traditional Messiah.

But Peter here, this is Matthew’s Gospel, in Matthew’s Gospel, Peter doesn’t simply leave it there. He says, **“The Son of the living God.”** Now **no one ever heard of such a title.** That is utterly new. It is a completely new category. You could say it’s not even biblical. **And Jesus’ reaction to that is, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you.”** This is not just from your regular way of thinking. This is not a result of your knowing the Bible. This does not come from any kind of catechesis or education or training, **“but my heavenly Father.”** This is what we call revelation, the disclosure of God. This is one of those very sacred, special moments in the mission of Jesus when God directly touches the mind of someone.

And so Peter now becomes the foundation. Peter of course is a Greek word for rock, *Cephas* in Aramaic. “You are *Cephas*, you are Peter, you are rock, and **upon this I will build my Church.**” Now of course the Church is a living Church. **It’s made up of people, not stones, but as people who need the foundation of this revelation,** of this divine disclosure that Jesus is the Son of the living God, a title not found in the Old Testament, a belief for which there had been no expectation whatsoever, **a new category,** if you will a new wineskin, something new and different. And that’s what this story is about. It’s about **we cannot understand Jesus until we let the Father tell us who he is.** People try to figure stuff out, and they are doing it all the time. Well, Jesus was this and Jesus was that; and they study history and that’s okay, but flesh and blood cannot tell us who Jesus was. Flesh and blood includes our brains and our language and our culture and any culture. This doesn’t come from humanity; this comes from divinity.