

Every baptized infant knows the answer to Jesus' question. They just need to have someone else, a sponsor, speak the answer for them. And so we see Peter acting as the sponsor for all the disciples. "*Who do you...*" Jesus asks. *You* here is plural in the Greek. "*Who do all of you say that I am?*" Speaking for them all, Peter answers, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Can you hear the grunts of approval from the others? Heads would have been nodding in agreement. Peter says it, and they all believe it. And in time, each one of these disciples would also give the same answer with their mouth. Had they not, they would not have died as martyrs.

What do you think of Jesus? Who is He? We are not infants any longer. We are able to speak for ourselves. Do you believe that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living God*? We could give our grunts of approval and nod our heads in agreement. But is this what Jesus is looking for? Does He give this as sort of a test question to His disciples? Check box A for John the Baptist, box B for Elijah, C for Jeremiah, or D for none of the above. And then when we stand before the pearly gates, we can hold out our test results to St. Peter and say, "Let me in; I gave the same answer as you."

But in Matthew 25 Jesus speaks of His sheep, who are "*blessed by My Father,*" and no test questions are put to them. Jesus does not say, "Welcome, for you answered correctly, 'Who do you say that I am?'" Instead, He points to what His sheep did on earth. "*As you did it to the least of these...you did it to Me.*"

People today are as confused about who Jesus is as they were in the days of our text. They do not believe Jesus to be John the Baptist anymore, or one of the Old Testament prophets. But they do call Him a good man, a worthy teacher, and certainly a good example. But that's about as far as most are willing to go.

Let me ask you, if you believe that Jesus was a good man, one we should emulate, and who taught many good things, and that's about it, would you even be here today? And more, would you focus your life around Him? I wouldn't. And if you are honest, neither would you.

If Jesus is anything less than *the Christ, the Son of the living God*, He will not take the most central position in our thoughts, words, and deeds. What you and I believe about Jesus will determine how we live.

The sheep on the Last Day are the ones, and the only ones, who truly believe that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. They are the *blessed* ones, even as Jesus calls Peter "*blessed.*" And this faith in Jesus is given, He says, by God Himself and by no one else.

But *faith without works is dead* and is not really faith. A parrot can be taught to say that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*. But words do not make faith. It's the other way around. Faith makes words. A baptized infant has real, living faith given to him by God Himself. And so the words will come in time. Because he believes that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living God*, he will learn to speak these words, and also to live these words.

On the Last Day the question, “*Who do you say that I am?*” will indeed be asked. But Jesus will not ask it of us. Rather, we will ask it of Jesus. Back to Matthew 25, the five foolish virgins knock on the door of heaven and cry, “Let us in! Because, after all Jesus, don’t You know who we are?” But He will answer, “*I do not know you. Depart from Me!*”

Jesus says, “*I know My sheep.*” And to Simon Peter, after confessing Him to be the Christ, says, “*You are Peter.*” Jesus is telling him, “I know you because you are one of My sheep.”

And so are you. Sheep confess Jesus to be *the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” And sheep live by this confession. But not so well. What you and I believe about Jesus should determine how we live. But we are wretched. We are pathetic. We are sinful through and through.

And so here is what Jesus does. What He says about you determined how He lived, how He suffered, and how He died. “Jesus,” we ask, “Who do You say that I am?” “You are a poor, miserable sinner. But for poor, miserable sinners I shed My blood on the cross of Calvary.”

And you are more to Him. For as Jesus called Peter by name, so did Jesus call you by name in your baptism. And next to your name, He wrote in blood, “This child of Mine is forgiven.” And nothing can ever change that. You, dear baptized child of God, are always one of Jesus’ sheep. You can be a confused sheep, a wandering sheep, even a lost sheep. But your baptism stands forever. And it always reminds you that you are Jesus’ forgiven sheep.

So tell me, what do you think of Jesus? Who is He? And is He worth dying for? You know how Jesus answered this question about you. Look at the marks of the nails and spear in His hands, feet, and side. There isn’t one of you who is left out. You are all included. You are all forgiven.

Knowing what Jesus thinks of you will help you, not just to say the words, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,*” but also to live them. Amen.