

The Stories of Easter

Simon Peter

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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You see, the most important, the most imperative question that can be asked of any person, any time in history is a simple question. Who do you say I am? Who do you say I am? Now this is a question that Jesus asked in different ways. He was asking people, "Who do you say I am?" So much of our life on the earth and our eternity hinges on exactly that question. Now, sometimes when we answer that question, all we've really done is chosen a mascot to follow or a well, yes, I believe in Jesus. But has he changed your life?

Has he really gotten a deep commitment out of you? Has the direction of your life changed because of the way you answered that question, "Who do you say I am?" See, today we're celebrating Palm Sunday as we did as early as the fourth century with the triumphal entry of Jesus on Palm Sunday.

If you remember that part in the Bible, many of you have read it yourselves where all of these prophecies were in fulfillment, cool things were happening that there's no other way it could have happened except it was the hand of God that did it. Main Street in Jerusalem.

And the people, "Oh, did they answer the question?" They answered the question, "Who do you say I am?" They laid off their outer garments and laying them on the ground and saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." They were waving nearby plants and just started ripping them apart and like waving them, "Hosanna, Hosanna, highest praise." They answered the question, "Who do you say I am?" But when I was reading it in preparation for this week, I caught something I hadn't caught together before.

They said, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." A king is a human social construct. It is an ear of wheat and traditionally and historically comes to conquer and to rule and to vanquish every foe. But none of them yelled God. It is the king of kings and Lord of lords. He is my Lord.

"I worship you." They said, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." They could have said that about any king, right? He was the king that came in the name of the Lord. If there's any gray area where I'm like, "Okay, Levi, may I say that?" We see just a few verses later that Jesus went off by Himself and wept. The Bible uses the word wept. And they didn't recognize that God had visited them.

That was the first time I caught that was just now, just basically this week. God visited you. God was in flesh. He was with us yet still, we answered the question, "He's the king who's going to do the things that we want him to do in our country." See, Jesus, when he was with his followers directly, beyond just the people that he just recently healed and performed miracles and people that ate his bread and fishes who just said, "He's our king." He went to his own believers, his disciples, and started off with this one.

"Who do people say I am?" He was leaving it kind of wide open. And this may be me projecting, so not necessarily here on this one. But I feel like the disciples heard the question and like, "Well, that's what he technically asked." They said, "The people say about who he is?" So that's the exact answer they gave him. Well, some people say that you are Elijah who's coming.

And some others say, "You're John the Baptist coming back." like They were tiptoeing around that one. But I don't where anyone was saying, "Well, you're the Son of God. You're our Lord. You're the king of kings. You're the bright You're the alpha and the omega. You're the beginning and the end." Until Simon Peter, he came along and said, "You are the Son of the living God." Now listen, all of those they were all Jewish men and they were well-versed in All of them, it was like a requirement. It was like going to high school here. They studied the Scriptures. They knew calling somebody the Messiah. You were either super excited because this was the most amazing thing that could or you are about to be stoned and killed for calling somebody the Messiah. That's literally what our choices were, "You are the Christ.

You are the Messiah." And I imagine some of them were going, "He said it out, okay. It's been said out loud." Because wondering, I've been thinking it might be true. I just didn't want to be the one to say it out loud. Again, that might projection, but it makes sense to me at least. Okay.

Jesus clearly responded positively to his boldness because then he said in Matthew 16, Jesus replied, "We though Apparently we don't." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah." There's something about saying a person ever met that nice person that's like, "Hey, how are you doing today, Joel? It's good to see you.

Like You feel affirmed." Okay, so Jesus is doing this. "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed blood." This is beyond anything you figured out on your own. But by my Father in heaven, whew, I'm putting myself a minute. Jesus Himself told me that I'm hearing from God. Yes. Okay, I got this. This is a good sign. Let me read scripture "And I tell you that you are Peter." Use his name again, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." Okay, keep going. I want to hear more, Jesus. "And the gates of Hades will not overcome it. And I will give you the keys to heaven." Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven because of the way he acknowledged our Savior.

His identity and his authority and his destiny, all of those things drastically changed. All of those things completely changed he answered the question, "Who do you say I am?" Now, I'm sure Simon was very pleased with himself. Again, so reading Bible stories, I put myself right into there like, "What would I say? How would I feel?" This Simon Peter right "Yeah, I got this.

I've figured this out. I've got this calling. I got this purpose. I got this destiny." And the next thing he needed to figure do with this calling, this destiny?" And that's a question we need to answer more than just acknowledging a religion I do with that calling? What do I do with that destiny and that power and that authority?

Now, again, still guessing here, but I'm guessing that changed his whole attitude about the way he held himself, and interacted with other people, about even when Jesus would talk to him. We know it changed his attitude about the way he addressed Jesus because later Jesus is like, "Listen, guys, Levi paraphrase here. This is all going to fall apart. You think out? But I'm going to be going to Jerusalem, and as soon as I get there, they're going to arrest me. They're going to do things.

They're going to beat me and torture me. That's what the Good Friday will be about, right? And then they're going to do a big fan of that. That did not fit in his narrative. That didn't work for him. His wisdom had some other ideas because This is literally what he did. He said, "Peter took him aside." And I'm imagine him going like, "Hey, Jesus. Hey, come here. Just a minute, guys.

I need Jesus for a minute. Come here, come here. Took him aside to rebuke him. Rebuke is a strong word, right? I never happen to you. Jesus turned and what did He say to Peter? "Get behind me, Satan." Now, do you think this Jesus himself had incarnated into it?

No, but he's saying, "This attitude that you have, this purpose-driven, whatever you're trying to do for your own wisdom, it's a stumbling block to me. You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the concerns of God

concerns." That's dumb. He didn't just say, "Stop. You're being a little extra right now." He called him a stumbling Satan.

He said, "You're not even thinking about the things, but only the things of this earth." That would set me back. Th up to that point, was protecting his own wisdom. He was protecting his own agenda. His understanding was affec interacted with the Savior. He put his value as a person and the measure of his greatness in his own self-inflation, appraisal.

Now, Jesus knew at his time on Earth was His ministry time on Earth. This was toward the end of his time on Earth crucified. So we know that as people get to the end of their life and people know that the end of their life is comir purposeful and more intentional about the way they communicate what they say to people, what they tell them a moments. So Jesus knew, "I don't have time. His destiny is too important for me to play around with this.

You're a stumbling block, and you need to stop it." And I don't know about you, but I need that. I need Jesus to sa being dumb right now." See, many of us live our whole lives, and I am the prime example of this, okay? We live ou Christian walk, our whole righteous living, our whole being faithful to the church, our whole lifestyle, as though th good Christian is to be able to have the nice other church Christian people say, "Oh, he's such a nice boy." "Oh, I h

Oh, I had that down." Oh, isn't she such a powerful Christian woman? Oh, my. What a great person of faith they a book on how to do that? I'm working on it right now, okay? I was that kid the church loves, okay? There's a point i drank or swore or like if the curfew was 11 o'clock, I was home at 10:59. I did get home at 11:02 once, but I never Mom.

And if I dated somebody in high school, they were a believer, and they went to church with me. And I was in the y worship team on Sunday mornings. I've said this about my teens and my young twenties. I had the ladies lined up law. And I've even said this now. If one of my daughters finds a person who at least acted like Levi on the outside, be okay with that.

Let's find out some more about you. But I was the person that the church has always loved. But I didn't realize ho other people to validate my faith. I didn't know how much my good behavior was the proof of my correct convicti was a good Christian because I was just this good boy. And the idea of doing anything wrong like offended me. Ne

See, I would have strictly disagreed with you if you said, "Oh, you're one of those self-righteous people. You have would have been like, "You don't know me. You clearly don't know me." But here's the thing, self-righteousness d snobbish. Someone who is holier than thou art can be fun. They can be approachable. Someone who's placed too good moral character, they're often very likable. I like that.

He's a good guy. I like him. See, these people can be some of the best church volunteers. They're the ones you wa nursery. You want them teaching our kids. They know how to live the righteous lifestyle. You see, it's actually the judgmental believers that are probably less dangerous because at least we can catch them in a crowd. That's som remember growing up in church and I would not miss youth group for anything.

If an event came up and it was on Wednesday night, I was like, "Oh, well, you planted on Wednesday. I guess that Sorry, I'll be at church." That was my life. That really still is my life. But my youth group was my youth group. I had for my youth group. I had such a sense of belonging and ownership of my youth group.

And that's part of the reason I went into youth ministry was that set me up to have the strong faith that I have to described today are bad. Moral living, that is what we should be striving for, right? Letting God and His teachings yes, please. Please do this. But I found myself, totally unaware, that I had my own kind of self-righteousness, and sin.

So my youth group, I was there every week. And this cool thing that our church did, that church is still there, still a was where I first started in youth ministry, was in Mount Pillar, Ohio, House of Prayer Church. Awesome place. Th near the church and paved it with blacktop and built a small skate park as an outreach to what they call the street

a low-rent community, so there's lots of latchkey kids, lots of kids from single parents and stuff like that who are j do.

And so they built this they spent a lot of money for this small church, had to put fence around it. But they had this skate park right there. And I can remember thinking like at different times I'd be going past the youth center durir didn't go there during the week. I don't know the street kids were there. Some of them cussed like right in front o would be smoking three blocks down. And I'm like, "I see you walking over here like I saw you smoking." This was thing, okay?

I know that some of you makes me seem old. And some of them would like you know go without their shirts on. T to a church building without a shirt on, the nerve of them. And I remember thinking in my inner dialogue, "It's ok Youth Center during the week." But later on, this is still my church and my youth group. And I remember when on youth group on a Wednesday night. And of course, I was like, "Hey, how you doing?"

Yeah, I see you during the week. You skate. That's cool." But inside I was going, "What are you doing in my youth here?" And I didn't recognize. I didn't recognize the self-righteousness. So I feel like I have more compassion for w like, "Oh, those church people are so judgmental." Okay, A, we're not more judgmental than the general populati church thing. We don't have a monopoly on that.

And B, I think most of us are not trying to. I don't think we're trying to. That was me. Again, if you had told me I w like, "You don't get me." So this was my youth group, and I only looking back, realize how I was basically keeping t kingdom of heaven by my righteousness. And so I remember being in that youth center one day, and I wouldn't gi the Lord will speak to you if you do this, but he did to me this day.

I said, "Lord, I'm going to open up this Bible that's just on the shelf over here and flip it open and we'll see if you'll Lord." And the particular Bible I picked up was a King James version. And the reason I remember that is because I' this Bible verse. And the King James Version is the only version that words this set of scriptures just this way. And when you get to the certain part, there's a heading for the next section.

It words it just this exact way. Most of the time when you get to Luke 5, there's a section that says, "The Calling of like, "Jesus eats with tax collectors," or "Jesus, Matthew, and the tax collector." Something along those lines. But version, if you pop it open, this is a screenshot from the Bible app. It says the call of Levi. There might be other ve James, it uses his Hebrew name, Levi. So I'm like, "Okay, God, okay.

Eyes open. I'm ready. What's this saying?" So in there it says, and we'll say it in the King James so you get the full e these things, he went forth and saw a public in a tax collector named Levi. Okay. Sitting at the receipt of custom. I And he said unto him, "Follow me." Essentially, he's asking him, "Who do you say I am?" Because if you follow me that I am one to be followed.

So he's answering the question, "Follow me and he left all. He rose up and followed him. And Levi made him a gre house." And this whole time I'm reading and I'm going, "Yep, this is me. I'm Levi. I rose and I followed him. Yes. He a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. Oh, yes, good and welcoming. Wonderful di

But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with pumpkins kids?" I added the street kids part in case you weren't following. And Jesus answering them said unto them, "They not a physician, but they that are sick." I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Now, I don't know if you've had this experience reading the Bible, but there are times when something dawns on picture. It's not just this point that was made. You see everything about yourself. And all at once, I saw myself as t "Why are those street kids coming to my church? This is my youth group. They smoke and they drink and they cus reason that today when probably part of the reason I'm in youth ministry at all because I can look back and think like, "I could have been inviting them to church.

I could have been friendly to them. I could have been the reason they found Jesus." And to this day, when a kid comes he might look a little rough or there seems to be something that he wouldn't normally fit into the church mold, I'm that they're there because of this moment. They need Jesus. Now, how many of you have ever said that before? "I need Jesus?" Oh, nobody. I guess it's just me. Okay.

But I think what we're trying to say when we say that is they need to find Jesus. They need to build a deeper relationship with the danger with saying just they need Jesus makes it sound like they need Jesus, but I don't. Because I still need Jesus. I needed him yesterday. I'll need him tomorrow. I need him today.

I needed that strong dad moment, that dad strength moment. I didn't stop needing Jesus just because I acknowledged needing food just because there's food in my refrigerator. I don't no longer have a need for housing because I have somebody's drowning, they need air, but I need air too.

We both need that essential. You don't stop needing something essential just because you haven't. Just because you All of us desperately need Jesus. But just so we can clarify in our hearts, I challenge us to change that wording a little they need Jesus because it sounds a little elitist. It does. We need to say, "I need to show them Jesus." It is on you Jesus is on you.

Now, every one of us will stand before the Creator and have an answer, so they will answer for themselves. But they know Jesus is because you haven't told him. Now, is it as easy as that? Can you just go out to the street corner? They You're never going to find me on the street corner holding a repent sign up. That's not me. Maybe there's a place

But what I would suggest and what I do and what I strive to do is I build the platform so that I can speak into their student comes to church, I'm not like, "Well, let's talk about your walk with Jesus. Have you been reading your Bible struggling with some secret sin?" They don't know me. See, God gives us everything we need for life and godliness: think, first and foremost, relationships with people.

So we need to be thinking every interaction I have with that grouchy cashier at Walmart or my own children, ever am I building my platform to speak into their lives? I need to show them Jesus. Don't just talk about their need for Jesus is not any greater than yours. See, it's actually inside your need for Jesus that you can be the one that points: imagine watching the best movie that there ever was.

If I'm just watching here and I don't want to turn from the screen, I'm tapping your shoulder, "Dude, do you want see this?" I'm not missing it either. You want to join in with me in this. It's only inside us knowing and acknowledging that people will approach us and we'll be able to speak into their lives. Because I think sometimes we take for granted grew up in the church for me, that people know, that people know that they need Jesus, and every one of them is

I remember one specific instance that kind of opened my eyes to that folly because I worked with this lady. We were department. There was only two of us. So I don't know, at least a good six of our eight-hour day, I was sitting next And of course, over time, you're chit-chat and stuff, and she said, "Well, I know you're like one of those Christian | Christianity.

Like "What a beautiful opportunity." And I started using our Christianese, "Oh, we're sinners, and that separated us came to save us." And it seemed so simple, but it struck me when she said, "Well, what would we be saved from?" this delusion that everybody's heard about Jesus and everyone has already either bold-faced with hatred, rejected church people.

We need to be thinking, "How can I continue to show that love of Jesus? How can I earn the right to speak into your Paul put it in a different way in 1 Timothy 1:15, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance." Side | I'd like to try to do when I'm reading the Bible is I look for key phrases like that because I imagine him going, "Here It deserves full acceptance." Like he's trying to get our attention here.

He says, "P.S., what I'm about to say is not very casual." Okay? There's some weight to this. Jesus came into the world whom I am the worst. Now, this is not a message of condemnation, but we just need to challenge each other as

wrapped up in being so good at church that you're no earthly good. Have you ever heard that? Don't get so heave no earthly good. Man, the Second Service gets more zingers, don't they?

Yeah. Of whom I am the worst, Paul knew he was the worst. Simon Peter was brought down to great humility even role in the church. See, we all love the idea of Jesus setting the world straight. Man, let Jesus come in and just bring don't always think about how Jesus needs to set me straight. You see, I need that dad's strength.

I have my ideas of the way things should be. I have my own wisdom. I have my own self-appraisal. I don't like that behind me Satan moments from Jesus. He's not afraid of setting us straight. He knows when to pull us back in. You going to be joining together and talking about the resurrection story, really the most important story that all of me about.

And the thing is, I need the resurrection story. I need Jesus. I need Him 10 seconds from now. I need my own way: wisdom. I need my own striving to just be blown out of the water and made insignificant because the work that is completed with an empty grave. Let's pray.

God, I thank you that you are the answer to our own selfishness, to our own self-appraisal, to our own wisdom, that You don't have to wait for us to figure it out. You have done the work of the cross. And God helped me and my sin righteousness and my good churchiness to not be the reason that somebody doesn't come to church.

God help us to continue to build our platforms, continue to build our right to speak into the lives of other people with good news that changes everything. Challenge us, Lord, call us out and yell, "Get behind me, Satan, you stumbling need it." We welcome that in Jesus' name. Amen.