

Luke 9:18-20

"Who Do You Say I Am?"

December 12, 2025

1. Intro

- a. Well, we'll see in just a few weeks one of the LITERAL mountaintops of Luke's Gospel, as Jesus will ascend the Mount of Transfiguration in verses 28-36
 - i. But here, in our passage for today, WE ascend to one of the FIGURATIVE mountaintops of ALL of the Scriptures
 - 1. There has been much confusion about who Jesus was up to this point
 - a. Herod the tetrarch, in all of his power and authority and wisdom, was left perplexed about this man named Jesus
 - b. We saw last week with the feeding of the 10,000+ people at Bethsaida that they also were equally perplexed about Jesus too, weren't they?
 - i. They loved Jesus when he was feeding their bellies and meeting their physical needs
 - 1. But as we saw in John's Gospel, when Jesus started talking to them about their SPIRITUAL hunger, they demanded more miracles
 - 2. When Jesus started talking about HIMSELF as the true bread from heaven, they began to grumble
 - 3. And when Jesus started saying such things as, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you..."
 - a. Well, when he began to talk like that, they all began to turn and walk away, didn't they?
 - b. Even many who called themselves his disciples turned back, and no longer walked with Jesus
 - c. They had decided in their heads who they wanted this Jesus to be
 - i. But when he refused to give them any more signs and wonders, and instead exposed the fact that they were spiritually STARVING...
 - 1. They didn't want anything more to do with him
 - a. The confusion of the people stretched from the masses in Galilee, all the way to Herod the Tetrarch
 - i. Until only the twelve apostles were left standing with Jesus
 - d. And now, here in our passage for this morning, Jesus confronts the twelve with a question of utmost importance...

2. Luke 9:18-20

- a. *¹⁸Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" ¹⁹And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen." ²⁰Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."*
- b. Well, though we don't know what Jesus was praying about here in these verses, it's important to simply note that he WAS praying
 - i. Luke is the only Gospel writer that includes this detail in his narrative
 - 1. Both Matthew and Mark also include Peter's confession about Jesus in their Gospels

- a. But only Luke tells us that this confession comes in the context of Jesus praying
 - i. And as Jesus was praying, Luke tells us that the disciples were there with him
 - 1. So maybe Jesus was praying over each one of them in this moment
 - 2. Maybe he was simply talking to his Father, and the disciples were just there, listening in
 - ii. Whatever the CONTENT of Jesus' prayer was, we are reminded here that Jesus prayed OFTEN to his Father in heaven
 - 1. And if that was the case for the One who was both truly man AND truly God, then how much more so do WE need to pray to our Father?
- b. Charles Spurgeon, who had an amazing ability to paint pictures in our minds with just his words, said this about prayer...
 - i. "Prayer pulls the rope below and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so lazily. Others give but an occasional pluck at the rope. But he who wins with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously, with all his might."
 - 1. Jesus, the very Son of God, grasped the rope of prayer often during his time here on this earth
 - 2. And as Hebrews 7:25 reminds us, as our great High Priest, Jesus is still praying today
 - a. He is praying for YOU, brothers and sisters in Christ
 - b. He is praying for me
 - c. He is praying for ALL of the saints of God, as the Scriptures tell us,
 - i. *²⁵Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*
 - c. Because the Lord Jesus himself prays for us, we have been saved!
 - i. May we also go to the rope of prayer often, and ring that bell with all our might!
- c. So as Jesus is praying, he stops and he asks them the question, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"
 - i. And the disciples give him a familiar answer, don't they?
 - 1. Some say you're John the Baptist
 - 2. Some say you're Elijah
 - 3. Some say that you're one of the prophets of old, risen from the grave
 - ii. This is exactly what we read back in verses 7-9, isn't it?
 - 1. This was why Herod was perplexed about Jesus
 - a. He had all these conflicting reports about who Jesus might have been, but none of them made sense
 - i. He had just beheaded John the Baptist, so it couldn't be him...
 - ii. Elijah and the other prophets had been dead for centuries, so it couldn't be any of them either
 - 1. So who IS this man???
 - iii. The disciples give him this reply about what the crowds say about him

1. And then he looks to each one of them, and asks, "But who do YOU say that I am?"
 - a. And Peter, the one who so often sticks his foot in his mouth and says the wrong thing, THIS TIME, he absolutely nails it...
 - i. You are THE CHRIST OF GOD!
 - ii. Matthew, who was standing there alongside Peter, tells us in his Gospel that Peter's full reply was, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!*"
 1. And Jesus replied in Matthew 16:17-19,
 - a. ¹⁷*"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*
2. Now I know that there are CENTURIES of disagreement between the Catholic church and the Protestant church about what Jesus was referring to when he said these words to Peter
 - a. The Catholic church would argue that Simon Peter is the rock that Jesus built the church upon
 - i. And from Simon Peter and the authority given to him in this passage, all the succession of popes throughout the history of the church ALSO get their power and authority
3. But I would humbly, yet firmly disagree
 - a. The only man that the church is built upon is Christ
 - i. HE is the strong foundation of all of it
 - ii. HE is the chief cornerstone, laid in place by God Himself
 - iii. He is the head of the body, the Church
 - b. It makes no sense at all to say that Peter, a sinful, fallen man, would be the one that Jesus would build his church upon, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it
 - i. No friends, the rock of the foundation of the church is not a man like Peter
 - ii. The rock of the foundation of the church is the confession that Jesus is the Christ of God
 1. And as John writes in 1 John 4:15,
 - a. ¹⁵*Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*
 - i. You, Jesus, are the Christ of God
 - ii. You, Jesus, are the Christ, the Son of the living God!
 2. Upon this confession, Jesus began building his church nearly two thousand years ago
 3. And upon this confession, Jesus is still building his church today, from right here in Sapulpa, OK, all the way to our brothers and sisters in the church in Somalia
 - a. Jesus is the Christ of God

3. But the question must be asked of this confession, "What do we mean when we say, 'Jesus is the Christ of God?'"
 - a. What did Peter mean when he said, "You are the Christ of God?"
 - i. This Greek title, *Christos*, comes from the verb, *chrío*, which means, "to anoint"
 1. So when we say that Jesus is the Christ of God, we are saying that Jesus is "the Anointed One of God"
 - a. And this idea of the Anointed One of God stretches FAR back into the Old Testament, as it corresponds with the Hebrew word, *Ma-shy-ack*...
 - i. Which of course is where we get the word, "Messiah"
 - b. Psalm 105 tells us that this concept of God's anointed one reaches all the way back to the Patriarchs of the nation of Israel
 - i. Starting in verse 7, the Psalmist writes,
 1. *⁷He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. ⁸He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, ⁹the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, ¹⁰which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, ¹¹saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance." ¹²When they were few in number, of little account, and sojourners in it, ¹³wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, ¹⁴he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, ¹⁵saying, "Touch not MY ANOINTED ONES, do my prophets no harm!"*
 - a. The anointed ones were Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob
 - i. Before Israel was even a nation, God anointed her forefathers as His own
 1. And he said to all the other lands, "Touch not my anointed ones..."
 - a. "Touch not my Mashiach"
 - c. This concept began with the Patriarchs, but it was made even more specific in the book of Leviticus
 - i. After Jacob and his family fled to Egypt during the famine...
 - ii. After they grew into a nation of well over two million people...
 - iii. After God delivered them from their slavery under Pharaoh's wicked rule...
 1. God led His people out of Egypt, and through the Sea, and eventually to Mount Sinai
 - a. And it was at Mount Sinai where he would give them His law
 - i. He would give them the Ten Commandments
 - ii. But He would also give them all sorts of rules and regulations about how they were to worship Him as their God
 1. They were not to come to Him in any way that their hearts desired
 2. They were not to come to Him according to the customs and traditions of the nations around them
 - a. No, because they were a stiff-necked and rebellious people, God constrained them in their worship
 - i. And really, this was for their own safety... for sinful man cannot stand in the presence of a Holy God
 - b. So God gave them instructions for the Tabernacle in which He would dwell
 - i. He gave them instructions about the sacrifices they were to bring to Him to atone for their sins

1. And He gave them instructions about the men who would stand before Him in the Holy of Holies
 - a. The High Priest was the ONLY one permitted to go beyond the veil, and into the room where the Ark of the Covenant was placed
 - b. The High Priest was the ONLY one allowed to stand in the room where God's presence dwelled
 - i. For the High Priest was the Anointed One of God
 - c. In Leviticus 4, if the High Priest sinned, he brought guilt upon the entire people, for verse 3 says that he is the Anointed One... the Mashiach
 - d. If the congregation of the people sin against the Lord, a bull shall be sacrificed, and the High Priest is the one who takes the blood into tent of meeting
 - i. For verse 16 says that he is the Anointed One... the Mashiach
 1. This position of Anointed One was first given to Aaron, the brother of Moses
 - a. But Leviticus 6:22 says that there will be a new Anointed One to follow after Aaron after he dies
 - i. And another Anointed One after that
 - ii. And another after that
 - b. Each was to bring a very specific offering on the day that they were anointed as high priest, and verse 22 says,
 - i. ²²The priest from among Aaron's sons, who is anointed to succeed him, shall offer it to the Lord as decreed forever.
- d. The title of Anointed One began with the patriarchs... it became more specific through the High Priests
 - i. And when God anointed David to be the king over His people, the title of Anointed One, Mashiach, was extended to him as well
 1. In 2 Samuel 22:47-51, as David is singing one of his many Psalms of praise before God, he says
 - a. ⁴⁷The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation, ⁴⁸the God who gave me vengeance and brought down peoples under me, ⁴⁹who brought me out from my enemies; you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from men of violence. ⁵⁰For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing praises to your name. ⁵¹Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love TO HIS ANOINTED, to David and his offspring forever."
 - i. David served as the Anointed One, the Mashiach, as king over the people of God
 - ii. And because of the covenant that God made with David, he knew that this title would extend to his offspring forever
 2. We'll come back to the Davidic anointing in just a moment
 - e. But there is one other important person in the Old Testament who is given this title of Anointed One, and this person is one we would not expect...
 - i. In Isaiah 45, the chapter opens by saying...
 1. "Thus says the Lord, to his anointed, TO CYRUS, whose right hand I have grasped..."

- a. Friends, Cyrus was not one of the Israelite kings – Cyrus would become the king of Persia
 - i. Cyrus would become the king of the mighty pagan empire that would expand across multiple continents after Nebuchadnezzar died and Babylon fell
 - ii. Cyrus the Great would become one of the most venerated rulers in all of the Arab world, as MILLIONS of people still travel each year to his tomb that exists today in modern-day Iran
 - b. THIS Cyrus, was given the title of Anointed One, Mashiach, over ONE HUNDRED years before he was even born!
 - i. Isaiah prophesied around 750-710 BC
 - ii. But Cyrus would not be born until around 600 BC
 2. And yet Isaiah 45:1-7 says,
 - a. *¹Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: ²“I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ³I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. ⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. ⁵I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, ⁶that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. ⁷I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things.*
 3. Why did God call this pagan king his Anointed One, his Mashiach, long before this king would even be born?
 - a. So that God could show the nations that HE alone is God
 - i. And He will anoint the one of HIS choosing to be His Mashiach
 4. My friends, when Peter made the great confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah of God...
 - a. These were all the different categories that this title would have encompassed
 - i. Although Peter had no idea at that point all that Jesus would accomplish, God the Father DID know
 1. And so He revealed this truth to the young fisherman from Galilee
 - a. “You are the Christ of God!”
 5. Like the Patriarchs of the Old Testament, Jesus is the Mashiach that must precede all who would come after him
 - a. In Colossians 1, verses 15-18, the Apostle Paul writes this about Jesus...
 - i. *¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, THE FIRSTBORN of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, THE FIRSTBORN from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*
 1. Jesus Christos, Jesus the Anointed One, is our elder brother
 2. But in a sense, Jesus the Anointed One is also like the Patriarchs of Old
 - a. For his is the firstborn of all creation

- b. And he is the firstborn from the dead
 - i. The Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were the preeminent forefathers of the people of God
 - 1. They were the Anointed Ones of God
 - ii. Jesus is THE Christ of God, and ALL things were created through him and for him!
 - 1. In Adam, death comes to us all
 - 2. But in Christ, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, we shall be made alive!
 - ii. Like the Old Testament Patriarchs, Jesus must be the firstborn
- 6. In the same way, like the High Priests of the Old Testament, Jesus is the Mashiach who goes before God on behalf of God's people
 - a. We saw this earlier in Hebrews chapter 7, but this language of Jesus as the great High Priest, anointed by God, flows through the entire book of Hebrews
 - i. In Hebrews 2, we read that this is why Jesus took on flesh and came to dwell among us
 - 1. Verses 17-18 say,
 - a. *¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*
 - i. Because Jesus clothed himself in humanity and suffered in all the ways that we now suffer,
 - 1. God has now anointed him to be our High Priest, who understands everything that we are going through in our lives
 - ii. But it wasn't just his suffering that makes him our great High Priest – it was that he suffered WITHOUT SINNING!
 - 1. In Hebrews 4:14-16, we read,
 - a. *¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*
 - i. Friends, this is an astounding statement!!
 - 1. Remember, back in the Old Testament, it was only the High Priest who could enter into the Holy of Holies to stand before God's presence
 - a. And even then, he could only enter in once a year, and only if he had already performed all the necessary sacrifices to atone for his own sin
 - i. No one else in the entire nation would even dare to do such a thing
 - 2. And yet now, because Jesus is our great High Priest, the One anointed by God, we can now – WITH CONFIDENCE – draw near to the throne of grace
 - a. We won't be shamed in guilt or condemnation
 - b. We won't be rejected in our unworthiness
 - c. We won't be struck dead on the spot

- [illegible]

2. This was why Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, would sing out in Luke 1:68-75,

- a. *⁶⁸Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷²to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

- iii. The people of God had been longing for the coming Messiah

1. They had been longing for the Anointed One of God to come and set them free

- a. And now, in Jesus, the Christ of God had come!
- b. The long-awaited Mashiach was here, just as God had said through the holy prophets from of old
 - i. But this Messiah came in a way that no one had expected
 1. No one would have expected that God would send His only begotten Son, who would empty himself and take on the form of a servant
 2. No one would have expected that the Anointed One from the line of David would be conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a young peasant girl from Nazareth
 3. No one would have expected that the Messiah would grow up in obscurity as a carpenter's son for the first thirty years of his life...
 - a. And that, when he finally did make his public appearance,
 - i. He didn't call for rebellions against Rome
 - ii. He didn't call for violent uprisings against the corrupt leaders of Judea
 - iii. He didn't lobby for any kind of earthly power or authority
 - c. But instead, this great Priest-King, the One who would be the firstborn of all who would follow after him, this Mashiach...
 - i. He would come as a Jewish rabbi with a ragtag group of young men as his main disciples
 - ii. He would come preaching a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins
 - iii. He would come preaching such things as loving your enemies, and blessing those who curse you, and praying for those who persecute you
 - iv. He would come speaking of things like forsaking the treasures of this world, and seeking first the Kingdom of God, and picking up your cross and dying to yourself
 - v. He would come as the spotless Lamb of God...
 1. The one who lived a perfect and sinless life
 2. The one who willingly went to the cross
 3. The one who willingly died, so that we, a bunch of worthless and undeserving sinners, could have life – life ETERNAL!

- a. And then this great Messiah was raised from the dead on the third day
 - i. The firstborn from the dead
 - ii. The firstfruits of the resurrection
 - 2. And this great Priest-King will come again, won't he?
 - a. As Revelation 19:11-16 says,
 - i. *¹¹Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*
 - 1. Jesus is the Christ of God
 - a. Like the Patriarchs, he is the firstborn from whom we all follow
 - b. Like the High Priests of old, he is our Great High Priest who always lives to make intercession for us
 - c. And like the kings in the line of David, he is the King of kings, who rules and reigns over EVERYTHING!
 - c. But there is one last category, isn't there?
 - i. What about Cyrus?
 - 1. Cyrus was God's Anointed One... but Cyrus was a pagan
 - a. Cyrus would serve his purpose by allowing the people of Israel to return to the land from exile, and to rebuild the Temple
 - i. But Cyrus would continue in his pagan ways
 - ii. And he is venerated by millions of pagans even today
 - b. So what does Jesus have in common with this pagan king?
 - ii. Remember, God raised up Cyrus for one overarching reason:
 - 1. So that the people would know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides God – He is the Lord, and there is no other
 - a. God called Cyrus that His creation might know that He is sovereign over EVERYTHING
 - 2. And in the same way, God has called His Son to be the FINAL and the ULTIMATE Anointed One
 - a. As Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:4, we come to Jesus, *"a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God CHOSEN and PRECIOUS..."*
 - b. For it stands in Scripture, *"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame!"*
 - d. My friends, Jesus is continuing to build his church, each and every day
 - i. Even as we see our numbers dwindling here in the US, the church is quietly and secretly growing in unexpected places like China and Iran
 - 1. Christ is building his church, all across the world

2. And he is building his church upon the rock of this singular confession, "You are the Christ"
 - a. You are the Anointed One
 - b. You are the Mashiach
 - i. You are the Firstborn from the Dead
 - ii. You are the Great High Priest who intercedes for our salvation
 - iii. You are the Mighty King who rules over EVERYTHING
 - iv. You are the One chosen by God, that in everything, you might be preeminent!
3. This is how Christ will build Forest Hills Baptist Church, brothers and sisters...
 - a. As we are faithful in believing these great truths about our Messiah
 - b. And as we are faithful in PROCLAIMING these great truths about Jesus, the Christ of God!