

Guest Preacher Rev. David Macleod (North Harris)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 August 2025

Preacher: Rev. David Macleod

[0 : 00] If you could turn back, please, with me to the section that we read in Matthew chapter 16. And again, let's pray for a moment as we go there.

Heavenly Father, we thank you once more for your word which we have read and sang. And now we turn to meditate upon. We pray for the help of the Holy Spirit.

The same Spirit who inspired the word to be written. We pray that he would be our teacher. That we would understand that our minds would be illuminated.

That our hearts would be touched. And that we would be enabled for the short time to be still and know that you are God. And we ask, Lord, that you would indeed minister to us.

Speak to our hearts. Speak into our lives. Speak to our souls, we pray. Help us to listen and to respond in faith to that message of the gospel.

[1 : 05] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. For most of us, I think probably one of the biggest struggles that we have in life is busyness.

We're speaking to Stephen this afternoon for a wee while. And we're reflecting on that fact that life seems to be just incredibly busy.

And even when we think about our forefathers, for whom everything that we have to do took so much longer. Transport, having to come to church, took so much longer.

They didn't whizz along in a car in two minutes. There was a long journey to get to church. There was no machinery. Everything took so much longer and was so much harder to do.

And yet, they seem to be much less busy than we are. And have more time for spiritual things. And that busyness that we are plagued with seems to me to affect all ages and stages of life.

[2 : 14] From the earliest of years, the young ones, the children, they are always on the move. They're so full of energy.

And they always seem to be busy. School, after school clubs, football, Highland dancing. There's an endless list of things that they are busy going to.

And then, when they get from primary school into teenage years, they're busy in a different kind of way. On computers and scrolling through reels and constantly being drawn to respond to messages and snaps or whatever it is these things are called that catch their attention.

And then, young adults going into middle age. There's the constant demands of family life and work life. And then, it seems to me, after the working life is done and people finally retire, it seems to me that often the retired people seem to be the busiest of all.

Going here, going there, going to the mainland, coming back. Looking after grandchildren from dawn till dusk. Life is hectic.

[3 : 24] And yet, that's not a new thing. Because even as we look into this chapter here, we can see that life was busy for Jesus.

And life was busy for the disciples of Jesus. And so, as we look at these verses this evening, from verse 13 through, really, to verse 15, we see the first thing that we can note is that Jesus, he pulls his disciples aside as he goes to Caesarea Philippi for some quiet time.

So, three points in the time that we have this evening. The first point is quiet time with Jesus. The disciples needed it back then. You and I need it today. The second thing we hear is a question that, or questions about Jesus.

The people in that place at that time. The conversations were filled with questions about Jesus. The identity of Jesus and what he was doing.

And that's our second point. And our final point is we hear a question, a very pointed question, that comes from Jesus to the disciples back then and to us here this evening.

[4 : 49] So, first of all, we have this quiet time with Jesus that we'll see here. Verse 13 says, Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi.

So, we can note the location here. Jesus, he deliberately makes a decision to go into the district of Caesarea Philippi.

One commentator, Legg, says, Jesus deliberately led the disciples away from the area inhabited by Jews to a more sparsely populated area where those who did live were largely Gentiles.

And we might ask the question, it's just a small half verse. But it's right to ask the question, why did Jesus do that? Why did he take them to that particular area?

And I think there are at least three possible reasons. The first reason that Jesus took them into that area was because we saw in the morning, things were heating up in terms of the clashes between Jesus and the religious and the civil authorities.

[6 : 06] In Matthew 16, in the early part of the chapter that we read this morning, we see this clash between Jesus and the Pharisees and the Sadducees as they come together in opposition to Jesus.

Scan back a few more verses into Matthew 15, and we see Jesus clashing with the Pharisees and the scribes. We thought also in the morning about Matthew 12, there's another clash with the Pharisees and the scribes and Jesus.

And so things are intensifying. And everything is very tense at this point. We get the sense that the enemies of Jesus, they are closing in on him.

And Jesus still has very much in the way of ministry to do. And so Jesus puts some distance between these enemies, these religious and civil authorities and himself, and he heads into the district of Caesarea Philippi.

So there's space created between Jesus and these enemies who are on his case. That's one reason that Jesus took them into Caesarea Philippi.

[7 : 19] The second reason Jesus went there was, I think, just to get some relief from the constant needs of the crowds.

Because if we scan the chapters preceding this, we can see that the demands that the crowds made on the time of Jesus were immense.

I mean, look through Matthew chapter 15. Just scan down the verses for a moment. And see the intensity of all that was being demanded of Jesus.

We see crowds who are constantly coming to Jesus for healing. Vast crowds. Continually coming to Jesus for healing.

And such was the compassion of Jesus that he met with them. He didn't push them away. And we see a Canaanite woman whose daughter is demon-possessed, and she's pleading with Jesus to cast this demon out of her daughter.

[8 : 32] We see Jesus caring for the spiritual needs of the people as he preaches. Not half an hour, twice a week, but a continual ministry of preaching to these crowds who are hungry to hear the voice of God.

And we see Jesus caring for the physical needs of the people. And we see Jesus caring for the people as he's not alone. And we see Jesus caring for the people as he feeds 4,000 men.

Plus women and children. Probably 12,000, 15,000 people. Scan back to Matthew chapter 14.

You see more of the same. More healings. Much more in the way of preaching. We see the feeding of the 5,000 men.

The 15,000, the 20,000 people that the commentators speculate were there. And so, even if we just look at two chapters and then cut it off there and isolate that short section, for Jesus, it's been all go.

[9 : 41] And sometimes we overlook the fact that Jesus is a man. Yes, he is God the Son, but he's a man.

Sometimes we overlook the humanity of Jesus. Because he was just like us. He gets tired. Like we do.

And so, Jesus goes 25 miles north of these crowds and all this activity to the area of Caesarea Philippi.

About 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Ross, the commentator, says, probably Jesus had gone there to escape as a retreat from the pressure of the crowds and opponents in his own land.

So, that's another possible reason that Jesus determined that he would go into this particular area. But the third reason, and probably the most important reason in this context, is that Jesus went to that area for the sake of his disciples.

[10 : 56] Hendrickson, the commentator, says that he went to that area to bring about the right atmosphere of quietness, serenity, and privacy.

The Lord decides, says Hendrickson, to go with his disciples into this district of Caesarea Philippi. The disciples needed quiet time with Jesus.

And that, I think, that he takes them away from the crowds. Away from the activity. Into this much more sparsely populated area where he is much less known.

The disciples needed quiet time with Jesus. And remember, the first call placed upon the disciples. The primary call placed upon the disciples, that we read in Mark chapter 3, verse 14, was a call to be with him. Yes, they would serve him.

[12 : 05] But their first call, their continual call, was a call to be with him. And Jesus, in this quiet time, in Caesarea Philippi, was going to reveal more of himself and more of his mission to them.

And as we think about this in terms of personal application, every disciple of Jesus, whether we are talking about the twelve back then, or if we're thinking about ourselves here today, every disciple of Jesus needs quiet time with Jesus.

time where we move away from the crowds, retreat from the busyness of life, to, as it says in Psalm 46, be still with the Lord.

Quiet time with Jesus is time where you and I are recharged spiritually. as the authority, what does it say? Those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.

Quiet time with Jesus is time where he reveals more of himself to us. And where he reveals more of his mission to us and where we fit into that mission.

[13 : 46] what we are to do with him and for him. We often focus in Ephesians chapter 2 on verses 8 and 9, which tells us that we are saved by grace, not by works.

Glorious verses. But in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10, we are reminded of the fact that God has prepared good works in advance for us to do.

Yes, we're saved by grace, but we're saved in order to serve him. There are good works prepared in advance for every one of us to do.

And how are we to know what they are if we don't sit down in quietness with the Lord Jesus and say, where will you have me go? What will you have me do?

Who will you have me speak to? And when we think about this day in particular, the Lord's day, this is a day that we have been gifted, where we are commanded to stop unnecessary work and spend quiet time with Jesus.

[15 : 08] not just this hour and an hour earlier in the day, but a day that is given to us especially so we can have time, quiet time with Jesus.

so let's be challenged and encouraged to put down the phone and to close the iPad and to ask him to minister to us throughout this day, but then into tomorrow morning and when we get into Tuesday and as the week goes on and as work intensifies and as family life gets hectic once more, still day by day, we need quiet time with Jesus.

So let's not neglect it, but let's cherish it because the reality is that there is no greater, richer, more joyous time than time that is spent quietly in the presence of Jesus.

quiet time with Jesus is the first point. The second point is we note here there are questions being asked about Jesus, questions about Jesus.

Verse 13, Jesus asked his disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah are one of the prophets.

[16 : 49] And so Jesus says, he has his disciples around him in this quiet time, in this time where he is able to minister to them one to one. He begins to speak to them, he opens up this conversation.

And the conversation that Jesus opens is a conversation about the people who are out there. He says in verse 13, who do people say that I am?

And that was the question of the day. Everybody was talking about Jesus. That's why the crowds were so vast and so continually gathered around Jesus because they're wondering, who is he?

How could they not be wondering who he is? How could they not be talking about him? Think about the way that he was and the things that he did.

Think about the courage of Jesus, for example. Everyone else bowed down to the authority of the Pharisees and the Sadducees because these were the powerful men.

[18:01] The people were terrified of them, getting on the wrong side of them. Not Jesus. They come at him, he stands up to them.

He's not scared of them. We see incredible courage as the people look in on this man who seems to hold much more authority than the most powerful men in that place at that time.

And then think about the wisdom of Jesus. When Jesus spoke, there was an authority that came from Jesus that no other religious leaders seem to have. Other religious leaders are quoting this one and that one and the next one.

But when Jesus speaks, it was as if God was speaking directly from heaven and the reason it was like that was because he was. There's the courage of Jesus, there's the wisdom of Jesus.

And then we've thought already, just as we scan through the verses, about the miracles of Jesus. The chronically sick are healed. The blind, their eyes are opened.

[19:12] The ears of the deaf are unblocked. Jesus gives mobility and strength to the lame. He gives rest and peace to those who were tormented by evil spirits.

He even gives life, resurrection life, to the dead. And so, it's no wonder that the people were asking questions about Jesus.

And through the ages, people have always been asking questions about Jesus. And maybe for our encouragement, we can note that today, presently, there are more questions being asked about Jesus in the UK than there have been for many years prior.

the Christian Institute say this, Bible sales are booming thanks to increased interest among Generation Z. Christian publisher SPCK report an increase in Bible sales of 87% between 2019 and 2024 and identified it as a generational culture shift.

So, more people presently in the UK are reading the Bible, asking questions about Jesus. And more people apparently are going to church also.

[20:44] The Bible Society reports a notable rise, particularly in young men aged 18 to 24 who are coming to the church in the UK.

So, for our encouragement, we may not see it, and barb us, we don't see much of it in Harris. But across the nation at present, people are asking questions about Jesus, and it's good to ask questions about Jesus.

And maybe there's somebody here, present, or maybe there's somebody who's watching at a distance, who's asking questions about Jesus.

That's good. But asking questions about Jesus and playing with theories is not enough.

Dabbling in religion, coming to church on occasions, is not enough. We need to get to the truth of who Jesus is.

[21:54] We need to see that he's more than John the Baptist. We need to see that he is more than Elijah. He's more than Jeremiah.

He's more than one of the prophets. We need to see the uniqueness of Jesus. That he's more than any other religious leader. He's more than a great moral teacher.

He's more than a good man. C.S. Lewis underlines that truth in his famous quote in his book, *Mere Christianity*.

You've probably heard the quote before, but let me read it. C.S. Lewis says, I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus. And that's this. I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That, says Lewis, is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.

[22:58] He would either be a lunatic on the level of a man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the son of God, or else a madman, or something worse.

you can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.

But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great moral teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

As we read on in this chapter, we can see that Jesus does not intend to leave this conversation with his disciples as an open conversation and a vague conversation about ideas out there.

He doesn't leave his disciples to play with theories and ideas. He doesn't allow room for doubts to be harbored about his identity. He presses in on the disciples.

[24 : 18] He wants them to see and believe and profess faith in him as Savior and Lord, as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

That takes us to our last point. It's quiet time with Jesus. There's questions out there about Jesus. And the last point is a question that comes from Jesus.

We have that in verse 15. Jesus said to them, but who do you say that I am? And if we try to think ourselves into that room where Jesus sat with these disciples, we can only imagine the atmosphere change as the question goes from general to personal.

Who do you say that I am? Asks Jesus. Jesus. And we can imagine in that moment, being able to hear a pin drop.

As Jesus' question just hangs in the air. And he awaits a response. Essentially, Jesus says, that's enough about the crowds out there.

[25 : 48] That's That's enough conversation about those outside and what they're all saying. What about you all, says Jesus? What are you saying?

Who do you say that I am? One commentator, Barclay, says, our knowledge of Jesus must never be at second hand.

A man or woman might know every verdict ever passed on Jesus. He might know every Christology that the mind of man has ever thought out.

He might be able to give a competent summary of the teaching about Jesus of every great thinker and theologian and still not be a Christian. Christianity never consists in knowing about Jesus.

It always consists in knowing Jesus. Jesus Christ demands a personal verdict. He did not ask only Peter.

[26 : 53] He asks every man. You, what do you think of me? Weerspeed the commentator says, if anyone else asked who do men say I am, we would think I'm either mad or arrogant.

But in the case of Jesus, a right confession of who he is, is basic to salvation. So this is not theory. This is a salvation issue. The apostle Paul made that clear in Romans chapter 10. Because in Romans chapter 10 and verse 9 it says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised them from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. So what was going on in the hearts of the disciples in that moment?

Is there faith in Jesus? Well, we know that there is because Jesus has said so. It's little faith.

[28 : 23] You can go to chapter 16 and verse 8, or you can go to chapter 14 and verse 31, and twice Jesus says to his disciples, you have little faith.

But as we said in the morning, it's saving faith because it's faith in Jesus. And it's him that saves us, not the volume of our faith.

To the disciples, they have faith, but it's little faith. And for the disciples, if that little faith is going to grow as it must and develop, it needs to be professed.

And so Peter, who is likely speaking on behalf of the disciples, makes that profession. Verse 16, Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Lord Jesus, you are the Christ, you are the Christ, you, Lord Jesus, are the promised Messiah.

[29 : 46] Not a prophet, in a line of prophets. But you are the one that all the prophets have been pointing to, you are the Savior.

Savior. And Peter says, you are the Son of living God. Not just a man, but the God-man.

God the Son. That was Peter's profession. And blessing follows that profession.

Jesus answered in verse 17, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father, who is in heaven.

As we finish, how does this apply to us? Well, it applies to us in exactly the same way as it applied to Peter.

[31 : 01] Because today, this evening, in this small room, through the word of God that is read, and the Spirit of God who carries that word to us personally, we are facing the same question.

Jesus is asking the same question of every one of us. He's saying, what about you?

What about you all? What about you individually? who do you say that I am?

If you and I can see that Jesus is more than a prophet, but that he is the Christ, he is the Savior. Savior. If you and I can see that he is more than just a man, but he is the Son of the living God,

that's because God the Father in heaven has revealed this to us.
and that revelation is given to us so that we will believe and having believed so that we will profess
that Jesus is our Savior and our Lord and having professed that we will know the blessing that
comes from knowing Jesus and from making him known.

[32 : 57] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you again for your word and we thank you above
all for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you that he is the Savior. And we pray that each one of us would know that revelation,
that we would see this, that we would understand this, and we pray that there would be no one here
this evening who would have received that revelation and yet fail to believe in him.

We know that it's possible to see and to understand many things about Jesus and yet not entrust
ourselves to him. And we pray that there would be none of us who would fail to believe and fail to
profess that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior who laid down his life and took it back up again for our
sake.

So minister to us we pray, help us in our own hearts to answer this question that comes out of your
word to each one of us.

Who do you say that I am? And we pray that we with Peter would echo these words and know the
blessing that comes from knowing in whom we have trusted.

[34 : 40] And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to conclude and we'll sing from Psalm
34 page 246 in the Psalter.

And we'll sing verses 1 to verse 9 of the Psalm. Down to the end of verse 8 and 9.

Oh, taste and see that God is good. Who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God is saints. None that in
fear shall be with want oppressed. God will I bless all times his praise my mouth shall still express
my soul shall boast in God the meek shall hear with joy fullness extol the Lord with me let us exalt
his name together I sought the Lord he heard and did me from all fears deliver they looked to him
and light and were not shamed with their faces this poor man cried

God heard and saved him from all his distresses!

The angel of the Lord encamps and drowned and compasses all those above that do him fear!

[37 : 12] them delivereth! O taste and see that God is good who trusts in him is blessed!

Fear God his saints none that in fear shall be with one no breast!

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God
the Holy Spirit be with us now and forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen.