

Sermon- Our Saviors Lutheran Church- August 11<sup>th</sup> 2019  
Text - Matthew 16:13-16

“Who Do You Say I Am”

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Exciting day today. After this worship service, as a congregation, you will be voting on a “new Pastor” for OSLC. You will decide whether he is the right Pastor to lead your congregation for the next 20 years or so. (That was a spoiler alert, it is a He.) So it is fitting that we use the Gospel text from Matthew that involves Peter and the building of Christ’s Church.

To use a phrase that is all too common today, Jesus asks for the results of the latest Gallup poll. If you aren’t sick of polls by now, you certainly will be over the next 12 months. So Jesus gets the results.

Well:

Among college educated white women, 57% say you are Elijah

Among non-college white men, 76% say you are John the Baptist

Among non- college Hispanic women, 65% say you are Abraham

Among college educated black women and men, 53% say you are David returned  
39% have no opinion.

Then Jesus asks Peter - Who Do You Say I Am.

The other day, I was playing golf with Gene Gregory, and Rev Frank Conner a retired Pastor from 1<sup>st</sup> English Lutheran Church in Appleton. Pastor Frank told me a story about a college kid who was a premed student. Pastor Frank knows I love stories.

This college student was enrolled in an Ornithology class, a part of the Zoology department - which was the study of birds. He needed to ace the final exam, and studied like crazy. He knew everything one needed to know about birds. Their beak size and composition, their distinctive color, their migration patterns. Everything. He enters the class for the final exam and the professor has four tables of “birds feet” arranged on the tables. That all - just the feet of the birds.

The kid realizes he know nothing about the feet of the birds. He takes his exam paper up to the professor and simply says “give me a F. I have no idea.”

The professor looks at him with some disdain and says, “Who Are You?”

The kid calmly takes off his shoes and socks, holds up his foot and says, “You Tell Me!”

Of course in our text Peter is able to answer. When Jesus asks Peter, “Who Do You Say I Am?” the response from Peter is that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the living God. Jesus then tells Peter that he would build his church around him, that he would be a Servant Leader.

A while back I told you another story.

A Pastor in a large congregation received a phone call from one of his parishioners. Not just any parishioner, but an important one. Which meant that he gave a lot of cash. It seems that the parishioner’s daughter had decided to drop out of Michigan Law School. She had announced this when she was home this past weekend, actually, after attending church. This parishioner wanted the Pastor to call his daughter Jenny and talk some sense into her. So he did. He called Jenny and reminded her how hard she had worked to get into Law School and that she just couldn’t throw it all away. “What inspired this decision anyway,” the Pastor asked. Jenny said it was his sermon. The sermon about being a servant leader. She talked about how she now felt that she was only in law school to meet her own selfish needs, and that his sermon shook something loose in her. She recalled how she felt when she was teaching the migrant children in the church program last summer. She felt fulfilled. And now she wanted to spend her life being a servant leader. “Now look Jenny” the Pastor said, “It was just a Sermon!”

Just a sermon. The kind that I have tried to give, and certainly your new Pastor will give. To be servant leaders - that’s the kind of church that Jesus wants. But we also know that Jenny got it wrong. We don’t have to live a life of poverty to follow Christ. We don’t have to move to a third world country to be servant leaders. We can do it now. In a world that says, it’s all about us, we can say no - it’s all about others. In a nation that says what matters most is your wealth, we and Jesus says, No - it’s what we do with our cash. In our communications and tweets that seems so polarized and people use nasty words we say No - we follow Jesus with kindness and acceptance for all God’s children.

That's what it means to be a servant leader. Here now, whatever your role in this church is - caring for the least of these my brothers and children.

In another month you will have a wonderful opportunity to practice this concept on Saturday September 7<sup>th</sup> when you go out in the community for our God's Work/Our Hands experience. Putting the concept of being a Servant Leader in practice. Sign up soon- the sign up sheets will be available shortly.

Peter got it. You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Now, Who Do You Say He is?

If you say the same thing, your church will thrive and be faithful to what Jesus was talking about.

As you did it to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it for me.

Amen- Let it be so.