**Who is Jesus?**

A sermon preached by Jason K. Ciarlante at Bethel United Methodist Church August 21st, 2011 Texts: Exodus 1:8-2:10, Romans 12:1-8, Matthew 16: 13-20

*Based on Matthew* 16: 13-20 *“Peters Declaration about Jesus”*

Today’s scripture reading reminds me of a group of wise guys sitting around a large table and the Boss (Jesus) starts asking questions about the word on the street about their operation. Reminiscent of a scene out of any movie he starts asking questions, when he’s really setting the stage for a major lesson. Well, when Jesus starts asking questions just like when the Boss starts asking questions, I pay very close attention. And here we have Jesus and his disciples sitting around when all of a sudden he asks his number two guy (Peter) what the word on the street is about their operation. Think about it for second we have Jesus and his disciples in Caesarea Philippi (even sounds Italian!) [[1]](#footnote-1) There all at a sit down and Jesus asks his “go to man” Peter what are people saying about him?

Actually he asks two questions Mathew 16:13"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” that’s the first question. Now that’s pretty big. If you were a disciple you’d know the Son of Man was Jesus, and now Jesus “The Boss” is asking NOT just what they say about him but who they say HE IS? Who do people say that THE SON OF MAN IS? That’s kinda of awkward language and sounds intimidating at first. WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT THE SON OF MAN IS? The second question Jesus asks is “…Who do YOU SAY THAT I AM?” and of course Peter answers “You are the Messiah, The Son of God”. So, Jesus the Son of Man is at the same time the Son of God. But let’s unpack the terminology and see what’s at play here.

1, SON OF MAN

Around this time in history roughly the early first Century in and around Judeo- Palestine the geo-political structure is dominated by the Roman Empire. The Roman Emperor at the time, Caesar Augustus himself is believed to be the Son of God. Earlier in time at Julius Caesars’ death he was proclaimed a God. This is why all emperors hence refer to themselves as a Caesar; Caesar Augustus, Caesar Tiberius etc. But these are Emperors you see. These are powerful men who rule kingdoms, and come from the wealthy stratosphere of the social structure. JESUS was a carpenter’s kid. Jesus comes from the bottom of the barrel. He was born in a manger, in Galilee, some little jerk-water town on the outskirts.

Why would the true God, The Most High God all Mighty’s son be born to the lowly? Its funny before I came to this church I thought I was unique. That God doesn’t understand me. I don’t need some lofty God on High to show me how to be me. What does your Christian God have for me? How can God understand my pain, my struggles with work and real life my struggles with loyalty and betrayal and the need for a better way. But that’s the reason for Gods middle of road birth. Now through Jesus Life on Earth, God knows first hand the struggle. In the Hymn, Children of the Heavenly Fatherwe just sang earlier it reads “..and their sorrows he knoweth[[2]](#footnote-2)” (United Methodist Hymnal, *Children of the Heavenly Father #141; 2nd Verse, Ln. 3).* God is with you all of you not through some Emperors power, magic mirror, heavenly gate, mighty structure. But because God s love for you was too much to be contained in the Hebraic scriptures it has come to fulfillment in the **LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST**.

2, NEW ADAM AND HEBREW SCRIPTURES

That’s the love of God in action, in reality, in our world, here on earth, Jesus our lords son, **The Son of God**, begotten not made Psalm 27 *“Begotten by God, You are my son; today I have begotten you”[[3]](#footnote-3).* These are weighty words “to be begotten”. In Hebrew it translates *qalp:* (to be born) or *hiph* (to beget). Now you may ask, “What does the Hebrew Translation have to do with it?” Well two things first. Adam was the first man. But you see Adam was made from the dust of the Earth in the image of God. Genesis 2:7 “…then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being”[[4]](#footnote-4). Jesus is the new Adam, the new heir apparent to the Glory of Gods Kingdom. But unlike Adam Jesus born, not made. The second reason to bring into play the Hebrew Scripture is today’s reading. The story of the Egyptian midwives saving the baby Moses. The unlikeliest of peoples hereto becoming the Savior of one who will bring new life to his peoples.

When I think about all the roles and allegorical descriptive titles assigned to Jesus it’s amazing. Bread of Life, Water of Life, Lord and Savior, Alpha and the Omega, and Son of God but what about how Jesus in today’s scripture references himself as the Son of Man? The Son of God the new Adam, born not made on Earth, born to the lowly Galilean town to a carpenter, blue collar folk. This to me is the most unlikely of scenarios for the Lord and Savior of the world to be born. It’s a huge Godly gesture of love. Our Lord and creator of all things good so wanted to understand you and for you to know it, so wanted to bridge the divine gap between heaven and earth that the only son of heaven was born on earth. BORN THE SON OF MAN.

3, LOVE OF CHRIST

I’m a new dad. I’m a very proud parent and I love my son. But loving my son enough to have him born in humility (I spoil my boy), to mature in humility and then sacrifice himself for the good of others. I couldn’t do it. But God did, Jesus the son of our Creator who knows our deepest human woes, because of Jesus’ life as the Son of Man. It’s a foundation of Christian faith is, John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life”.

God just so loved the world that much, in Corinthians 13:4. Love is Defined LOVE IS Corinthians 13:4. Love is Defined LOVE, Love IS PATIENT, KIND, NOT ENVIOUS, NOT RUDE, NOT BOASTFUL, NOT INSISTING ON ITS WAY, NOT IRRITABLE OR RESENTFUL, NOT REJOICING IN WRONGDOING, BUT REJOICED IN THE TRUTH AND ABLE TO BEAR ENDURE ALL THINGS[[5]](#footnote-5).

I stand here today and I have to tell you I am none of the above. I’m impatient. I often told I’m UNKIND. Envious rude boastful, I boast I’m a boaster. I always want things my way. Irritable, resentful, rejoicing in wrongdoing, rejoicing in the denial of truth yeah sounds like me. Bearing nothing, enduring nothing, yep try me around my family you’ll see. I got them all. But, here on Sundays, in this Church it’s different. And it’s by no feat of my own. Here I am able to be Love. Here in Gods church I am able to be a sanctuary for the love of the Holy Spirit. Here in this church. The word and the way is given to me and You as it was given to Peter. Here on Sundays all are welcome, all are loved and all are able to be a part of Christ.

4, SANTUARY FOR CHRIST

In a few moments will welcome new members’ Mychal and RoseMary Rumolo and be baptizing little Devon Rumolo. What so calls these people to join us here on Sundays, calls them to stand with us in mercy and compassion for one another in Christ? Here within these walls they have found sanctuary. I pray the peace of this day and the joy of our celebration stay with all of you this week. I pray each of us grasp that God through Christ the Son of Man knows the struggles of your hearts first hand. I pray that through it all you remain open to the Holy Spirit.

That same breath breathed into Adam now available to all of us via the Holy Spirit by Christ’s life. Let that Love be welcomed into your hearts, there make for it a sanctuary. Who we say that Jesus is says more about us then we know. Let our actions be bold and our ways righteous, for in Jesus we have the way. The last words Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote for public utterance was “The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts about today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.” (Light From Many Lamps: *Part Ten, Hope for the Future*, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Watson, L.; Simon and Schuster, NY 1951, p. 311)[[6]](#footnote-6).

Ask yourselves then, not simple just what Jesus would do. But what will you do with the love of Jesus in your heart. The love of one who is PATIENT, KIND, NOT ENVIOUS, NOT RUDE, NOT BOASTFUL, NOT INSISTING ON YOUR WAY, NOT IRRITABLE OR RESENTFUL, NOT REJOICING IN WRONGDOING, BUT REJOICED IN THE TRUTH AND ABLE TO BEAR AND ENDURE ALL THINGS.

Amen.

1. Caesarea Philippi during 20 B.C. the Roman times of the New Testament was transferred to the control of [Herod the Great](http://www.keyway.ca/htm2002/herod.htm) who built a temple there to [Caesar Augustus](http://www.keyway.ca/htm2000/20000503.htm) (the Roman emperors claimed to be gods in ancient times. After Herod died in 4 B.C., it came under the authority of Herod's son Philip who renamed it after [Tiberius Caesar](http://www.keyway.ca/htm2002/tiberius.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. United Methodist Hymnal, *Children of the Heavenly Father #141; 2nd Verse, Ln 3)* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Psalm 27 Begotten by God, You are my son; today I have begotten you. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Genesis 2:7 “…then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, kind, not envious, not rude, not boastful, not insisting on its way, not irritable or resentful, not rejoicing in wrongdoing, but rejoiced in the truth and able to bear endure all things [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Light from Many Lamps: Franklin D. Roosevelt *Part Ten - Hope for the Future*, Watson, L.; Simon and Schuster, NY 1951, p. 311 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)