

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
G. Fred Steven's Message of March 29, 2009
"Who Do You Say He Is?"**

[Jesus asked Peter, "Who do YOU say that I am?" That's a good question for all of us to ponder. How we, individually, answer that question depends upon where we are in our walk with Jesus.]

[Topics: Who Is Jesus; Belief; Trusting in God; Miracles; Works of God; Worship]

Excerpt: Let's start in Luke 9 with this important question. Jesus asked Peter, "Who do YOU say I am?" **Luke 9:18-20, Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" 19) They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."**

20) "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

The implications of that answer and the implications of that understanding of who Jesus is, is very far-reaching. Jesus asked Peter and the others this question in order to make them think about it. And we, too, need to think about its implications in our daily lives.

So, where we are in our lives right now, who do you say Jesus is in your words you speak? Who do you say he is in your actions, in your work, in your recreation, in your habits? Who do you say he is in your life-style? Who do you say he is in your physical presence, in your attitude, in your outlook? Those are BIG questions.

So now let's look at some events in Jesus' ministry that will help us address people's perceptions about who he really is. And the event we'll start with is the one Pastor Glen talked about last week. So let's begin in **Mark 6** and review a little bit about the feeding of the 5000.

Mark 6:30-34, The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Remember how Pastor Glen discussed some lessons that we can learn from here. About how Jesus shares ministry, and involves us in ministry, and gives us ministry to do. We show who Jesus is through the things we do.

31) Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." 32) So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

33) But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34) When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. So we find that despite being tired, Jesus ministered to the crowd because he had compassion on them, because he cared.

But there were also some other things going on around this time and Scriptures like **Matthew 14** talk about John the Baptist. **Matthew 14:6, On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much 7) that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. 8) Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."**

You see, John the Baptist had spoken up for truth and said what wasn't popular. And he criticized Herodias as Herod's wife and she hated him for it. Even though Herod was intrigued by John and liked to listen to him, he got tricked by his wife in front of a group of people. Herod succumbed to the peer pressure and the political pressure of the moment.

9) The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted 10) and had John beheaded in the prison. 11) His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. 12) John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

This event was also going on just before the feeding of the 5000. Jesus' disciples had gone out doing ministry – healing and casting out demons in the name of Jesus. The disciple's ministry began to come alive. Remember how John prophesied that he must decrease so that Jesus and his ministry would increase. This is John's ultimate decrease.

13) When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14) When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

16) Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." 17) "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. 18) "Bring them here to me," he said.

19) And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20) They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21) The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

That is a big catering event. Jesus can do very big miracles. But why did Jesus do the miracle the way he did it? To teach ministry? That's part of it. Jesus did it out of his grace and goodness and to demonstrate a lesson. Who did they say he is? Who does the crowd perceive who Jesus is? You will see that what they think and what Jesus is teaching are two different things here. Jesus is on a much higher level.

22) Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

Now John adds something to the story that's not in Matthews account. **John 6:14-15, After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is**

the Prophet who is to come into the world." So who did the people say Jesus was – a prophet. And a prophet is a man.

15) Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. The crowd said that Jesus was the answer to their political problems. In essence they were saying, "He's the one we want to overthrow the Romans and give us some relief from our immediate political problems." But that wasn't the point Jesus was making. And so he went away.

Mark 6:45-52, Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46) After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

47) When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. 48) He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. The disciples were tired in the first place. Then they were involved in this big catering event and got more tired. But Jesus wouldn't let them rest. He told them to get into the boat and row. Now it's getting harder and harder to row because of the high winds against them. They are worn out and are having a difficult time.

About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, It appears that Jesus wasn't going to stop at their boat. What would they have done if he kept on walking? What would you have done? Kind of interesting.

49) but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, 50) because they all saw him and were terrified. They obviously didn't recognize him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Jesus responded to them. He had compassion on them.

51) Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52) for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened. So, if their hearts were hardened, who did they think he was at this point? They thought he was their rabbi, their teacher. He was a very special teacher from God. But it was like they were still seeing him as a man.

Now, picking up the story in **Matthew 14:28**, we read, "**Lord, if it's you,**" Peter replied, "**tell me to come to you on the water.**" Peter wants to imitate his teacher. What ever his teacher does, Peter wants to do.

29) "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30) But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31) Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.

Peter took courage, got out of the boat and began to walk on water. But the cares of the world, the problems surrounding him, the everyday challenges impacted Peter and he sank. And Jesus immediately reached out and caught him.

"You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" Do you think Jesus expected Peter to sink? Jesus knew that Peter would doubt. He knew human nature.

32) And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. So how did they get back to the boat? It doesn't say. Perhaps Jesus held Peter's hand and they both walked back to the boat. Notice, they climbed into the boat. They didn't just levitate in. The wind is still rocking the boat. When the wind died down, it was another miracle.

33) Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." Now who do they say he is? Now their attitudes and reactions toward Jesus are different. Now they realized that Jesus was bigger than just a teacher or prophet. He was God. He was the Son of God. Once they truly realized who Jesus was, they worshipped him.

Should the disciples have worshipped Jesus even if he had passed them by on the water? Certainly, given who he is. What would we have done if we were in the boat and Jesus had walked by? What about us in our daily trials, problems and the winds that buffet us, will we worship him?

In spite of the stock market, will we worship him? In spite of health, marital, family issues, relationships that hurt, family member we've lost, bad things that happen to us by the government, by the guy next door, by the thief in the night, by the trusted friend, will we worship Jesus – even if he walks by and doesn't fix those things?

Now let's go back to **John 6:21. Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.** Remember that the disciples were in the middle of lake making no progress against the wind and the waves? Now all of a sudden, they reached the other end of the shore. Another miracle! Jesus is doing some big miracles here these past two days starting with the feeding of the 5000. One of the lessons we can draw out of this is that when the Lord handles things, all the details are taken care of.

John 6:22, The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. 23) Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24) Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

Who did they think he was? Who were they looking for? They were looking for a man to solve their current problems, their political problems.

25) When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 26) Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. So, who did they think he is? Another lunch – someone to feed them. Notice what they didn't do. They didn't worship him.

27) Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Jesus isn't talking about physical food here. He's talking about spiritual food and spiritual nourishment. Jesus will provide us today the spiritual nourishment that we need. Now Jesus might not provide all the physical food and wants we have. He didn't find a way out of prison for John the Baptist, did he? What he does provide is food that leads to eternal life.

Now Jesus told them not to work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life. But all they heard was the word "work." Their lives and their religion were based upon works, not upon the gift of grace from God. They had no understanding of God's treasure of love.

28) Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29) Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." Jesus answered their question – just believe. They really wanted to know if they had to pray four times a day, if they had to go somewhere special, if they had to slaughter a particular animal. The implications of believing and accepting who Jesus is – is huge.

30) So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?"

Even though they had seen Jesus perform many miracles the day before – healings and then feeding them, they still demanded another sign because they didn't yet believe. It's interesting to note that miracles aren't necessarily the key to faith. Let us have faith and then God will do miracles.

Jesus performed all these miracles for the crowd and for the disciples out of his compassion and out of his grace. He loved each person. But in reality, there's nothing we can do to earn his miracles in our lives. It's false to think that if I just do more of this and that then maybe God will do this for me. It's not by our works that God blesses us; it's by his mercy.

31) Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' 32) Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33) For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Who do we say he is? He is the Bread of Heaven. He is revealing himself as the true Bread that sustains us through everything.

34) "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." 35) Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus isn't talking about physical hunger and physical thirst. He's talking about spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst.

36) But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. They saw Jesus do miracles and heard him talk, but they still didn't believe who he really is. Could that happen to Christians?

We all know our path. It's kind of like being on a staircase. We're all going one step at a time in a direction towards God, towards his kingdom. Each of us is on a particular step. And hopefully tomorrow we'll be on a higher step. We don't need to criticize what step someone else is on and what they understand and don't understand. We're just on our journey.

But every step brings a slightly different vantage point. Now when we first began to understand Jesus, we asked ourselves, "Who do I say he is?" And we had a certain answer. And as we grow and as we learn, we can still ask that question and hopefully have a deeper understanding of who he is. Hopefully we can better praise him, because that's what we're made to do.

Now we're going to end this in **Luke 9:23**. **Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.**

Taking up our cross daily means that Jesus deserves our praise and devotion despite the challenges we face. We can be thankful instead of complaining. We can show patience in our trials. We can show contentment in what we have. We should be thankful for our blessings and even our trials in the way they make us stronger and in the way they teach us. But that's a big pill to swallow.

But it's all part of this question: "Who do YOU say he is?" Will you worship him if he doesn't feed you; if he doesn't solve each day's problems; or make your life effortless? If God doesn't heal your bank account, or he doesn't redeem your property value, is he still the Lord of your life?

Do you display who he is in what you say, in what you do and how you radiate praise for him no matter what comes your way? It's not about Jesus solving my problems my way, it's about us finding his will and submitting to it.

We need to learn to put our life into his hands and be responsive to him. When he says wait on me, we need to do that. And when he says to do something now, we need to act. Do we trust him to be the Lord of our lives? Do we trust that he has a will for us, individually and a plan for us and opportunities that he wants to bless us with out of his mercy and out of his grace? His solution maybe very different than ours.

God may solve our immediate problems or he may let them be there. And so all of us together have to learn that no matter what, he is the Lord, the living Son of God. He deserves all our praises; that's why we exist. It's what we should radiate. It's our future; it's our hope; it's how we will spend all eternity.

Have you ever wondered how it's going to be – united with all our departed friends and family and with all the people God is bringing into his kingdom and to stand there together to praise him and to honor him and to enjoy what he has for us. There'll be no more pain, no more crying, no more winds. We won't be wet and cold.

We'll be happy and radiant. And because he's the Lord of our lives, we can feel all of this inside of ourselves now, and live that way now. Despite our problems, he's still the Lord.

Halleluiah!! Let's praise God.

Key Scripture: Luke 9:20, "But what about you?" he (Jesus) asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

General Group Question: If someone asked you, "Who is Jesus?" what would you say?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. After Jesus had fed the people, why did they try to make him king by force? How did they interpret his miracles? Who did they think Jesus was?
2. Why do you think Jesus walked on the water out towards the disciples' boat?
3. What lesson can we learn as Peter attempted to walk on water like Jesus did?
4. Why do you think the disciples worshipped Jesus when they were in the boat, but they had not after the feeding of the 5000?
5. Why do you think the crowd followed Jesus the next day to the other side of the Lake? What were they seeking? What was Jesus willing to provide them?
6. How did Jesus answer the crowd's question, "What must we do to do the works of God?" What is the difference between religious works and belief?
7. What does Jesus mean when he tells us, "He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty"?
8. Does believing and trusting in Jesus as our Savior always mean that we will have all our problems solved and that our life won't have any difficulties or sorrows? Why or why not?
9. What is the hardest part of letting God lead you in your life and putting your complete trust in him?