

PETER'S CONFESSION

The Gospel Lesson: John 6:59-69 Text: vs. 69 *"We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."* Today, we look into the moment that defined the faith of one of Jesus' closest disciples, Peter. But it also lays the foundation for the Church. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, happened when Jesus and His disciples were in the region of Caesarea Philippi, about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee in the Jordan River valley at the base of Mount Hermon. Caesarea Philippi was known for its pagan worship and idolatry. It was a city filled with statues, temples, and shrines to foreign gods. Caesarea Philippi was a center of idolatrous worship, worshipping trees, rivers, hills, and stones, and the imaginary power of false idols. (Acts 7:43)

Here, among the backdrop of false gods and worldly distractions, Jesus asked a profound question of His disciples: *"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"* Their answers showed confusion and speculation. They said some people believed He was **John the Baptist**, probably due to the powerful preaching and baptizing ministry both shared. Some said **Elija**. A lot of Jews expected Elijah to return before Messiah came. And Jesus' miracles and prophetic actions reminded them of Elijah. He publicly spoke the prophetic words of God to the people from the time of His baptism at the Jordan River until He died on Calvary's cross. Others said He was **Jeremiah**, after they heard Jesus' message of repentance and His concern for the people, which sounded like the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah. Still, others said, **One of the Prophets**. They saw Jesus as a continuation of the prophets proclaiming God's truth to the people. Those responses reported by the Disciples showed that while many recognized Jesus was an important spiritual figure, they did not fully grasp His true identity as Messiah, the Son of God. But when Jesus asked the Disciples directly, *"What about you? Who do you say I am?"*

Simon Peter, who often spoke for the Disciples, boldly proclaimed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."* Peter admitted, Jesus was not just a great teacher, or a prophet. He was Messiah! The Anointed One! Sent by God to save humanity. Peter's acknowledgement of Jesus became the cornerstone of our Christian faith. And that was important! Peter's recognition of Jesus' true identity was a profound moment for several reasons. When Peter identified Jesus as the Christ, the Anointed One sent by God to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament, Peter's statement went beyond Jesus as a teacher or prophet. Peter recognized Jesus as the long-awaited Savior who would bring salvation to humanity. He was Messiah! And that didn't come from human insight. Jesus said it was revealed to Peter by God the Father. He said, *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven"* (Matthew 16:17) which shows, true knowledge of Jesus' identity was a gift from God. It's not something that can be assumed through reasoning alone.

And Jesus responded to Peter with a promise: *"I tell you, that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church. And the gates of Hades will not overcome it."* (Matthew 16:18) Here, Jesus used a play on words with Peter's name. Peter in Greek means "rock." He used it to show that Peter's faith and confession would be the foundation of the Church. His clear confession of faith, and his leadership after Jesus' ascension, would be the "solid rock" on which Jesus would build His church. Peter's statement underscores the strength and spirit of the Church being built on the truth of Jesus' identity. And Peter's recognition of Jesus' true identity was a turning point in Peter's own spiritual journey. He now had a deeper understanding and commitment to Jesus' mission. Despite Peter's later failures and denials, they did not define him. They were horrible. Sure! A humbling stumble along the path of following Jesus.

Peter had been one of His closest and most loyal disciples. He had witnessed numerous miracles and teachings. He even proclaimed Jesus as Messiah; however, as Jesus' crucifixion was nearing, fear and uncertainty began to grip Peter's heart. It was in this vulnerable state that Peter denied any association with Jesus. He strongly disowned Jesus on three separate occasions. After He was arrested Peter said, "I NEVER KNEW HIM!" (Mt. 26:72) The betrayal of his beloved teacher and friend would become a source of deep regret and sorrow for Peter in the days ahead. And when Jesus died on the cross, it completely paid for the sin of **Peter's denial**. *"Not guilty"* was the final word for **Peter**. Jesus knew Peter did not deserve acquittal. But the moment Peter said, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"* it became the cornerstone of Peter's leadership in the early Church.

Peter's confession challenges all believers to reflect on their own understanding of who Jesus is. It calls you to move beyond your shallow beliefs and accept a deeper personal conviction of Jesus as the Christ. This confession is not just a statement of faith. It's a call for you to live out your faith in your daily life. Bearing witness to the truth of Jesus' identity. Yes, Peter's recognition of Jesus' true identity was a powerful testament to the power of divine revelation and faith. And it should remind you, that understanding who Jesus is requires more than just your intellectual approval. It demands your heartfelt confession. Your life committed to following Him.

And this morning as we reflect on Peter's confession, may you be inspired to deepen your own faith and boldly proclaim Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. True understanding of Jesus' identity comes through divine revelation, not human wisdom. Peter's confession should challenge you to reflect on your own understanding and testimony of who Jesus is. In a world that's filled with distractions and false idols, you need to recognize and proclaim Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. This is not just a statement of belief. It's a commitment to

live out your faith boldly and faithfully by applying this lesson of Peter's confession to your life today. But it involves several things. Take time to believe who Jesus is, to you, personally. Is He just a historical figure? Or do you recognize Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God? Like Peter, boldly declare your faith in Jesus. This can be done through prayer. Conversations with others. Even in your daily life. And pray for understanding. Ask God to reveal more of Jesus' true identity to you, because understanding Jesus deeply is a spiritual journey that requires divine insight. And read your Bible regularly to learn more about Jesus' life, teachings, and His role as Messiah. Just as Peter's confession became the foundation for the Church, let your faith in Jesus be the foundation for your life. Build your decisions, your actions, and your relationships on this "solid rock." Be part of a church, or a fellowship group, where you can grow in faith supporting others, and supporting yourself in your spiritual journey. Be a Witness. Share your faith with others through your words and actions. Let your life reflect the love, grace, and truth of Jesus by following Jesus' example of serving others. Look for opportunities to help those in need by showing Christ's love in practical ways. You can show Christ's love in practical ways that have a profound impact on those around you. Help a Neighbor. Offer to help out with chores, run errands, fix something, or provide a meal for someone in need. Pay for someone's coffee. Leave a generous tip. Write a note of encouragement to a friend or coworker. Serve at our local food bank every Wednesday. Your time and effort can make a significant difference in your life and the life of others. Donate to our Missions Committee's selected organizations. And work to help those in need. Sometimes, the best way to show love is simply by being there for someone. Listening to them, without judgment. Just offering your support. Try to understand and share the feelings of others. A caring heart can provide comfort and healing. And always offer words of support and encouragement by letting people know you believe in them and their potential. Especially, be a source of strength for those going through tough times. Offer help such as babysitting, cooking, or just being a shoulder to lean on. You can be a blessing by forgiving those who have wronged you, which reflects Christ's love and can bring healing to relationships. Always be patient and understanding with others, recognizing that everyone has their struggles. And don't forget to share *Your Story*.

Peter was instructing Christians in a letter he wrote to a group of people that probably included both Jews and Gentiles. In 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 1, He addressed the letter's recipients as "*aliens*", a word that indicated Peter was speaking not just to Jews or just to Gentiles. But to Christians who were living their lives in such a way that they would have stood out as aliens among the surrounding culture, he wrote to them not to fear those who caused them to suffer for the sake of Christ. He wrote, "*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*" (1 Peter 3:15) And especially in our days of uncertainty, talk about how your faith in Jesus is helping your life. Your personal testimony can inspire and encourage others. And never overlook inviting others to Church. Extend an invitation to friends or family to join you at church. In all your dealings, always conduct yourself with honesty and fairness. Your honesty will reflect Christ's love by letting your actions speak louder than words. Live in such a way that others can see Christ's love through you. And if you include these ideas into your daily life, you can actually show Christ's love to those around you. Each small act of kindness, service, and concern will make a big difference and reflect the love of Jesus in a real way.

Which of these ideas appealed most to you? You don't have to do them all. Take one. Then two. And then three, allowing God to transform you, just as Peter was transformed from a fisherman to a leader of the Church. Be open to the changes God wants to make in your life. Trust that He has a purpose and plan for your life. As you grow into Discipleship, you will grow in your relationship with Jesus. It will involve learning, obeying His teachings, and becoming more like Him in character. Become a Peter! Peter's confession is a powerful reminder of the importance of recognizing and telling of Jesus' true identity. Think about your beliefs. Then ask for divine revelation building your life on the rock of faith. Live your faith. And by accepting your transformation, you can apply this lesson of Peter's Confession in meaningful ways to your life.

And as you leave today, take with you the overwhelming truth of Peter's confession. "*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*" Let it shape your life, your actions, and your witness to the world. Then, you like Peter, will stand firm on the rock of your faith, confident in the promise that the gates of Hades will never overcome the Church. AMEN