

**PRAISE INTERNATIONAL**  
**RIGHT CONFESSION OR RIGHT APPLICATION?**  
**Matthew 16:13-20**

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**Good Morning**

Prayer Needs

Matthew 16:13-20 - From 'First Nations Version NT'

*They journeyed on and came into the territory of Ruler of the Horsemen (Caesarea Philippi). This territory was ruled by Chief Looks Brave (Herod) under the authority of the Ruler of the People of Iron (Caesar).*

*There was a cave and a deep, bottomless pit there that was called by the local people "The Gate of the Dark Underworld of Death (Hades)." This was a place of bad medicine and lying spirits.*

*When they came into this place, Creator Sets Free (Jesus) asked the ones who were walking the road with him, "Who do the people think the True Human Being is? What are they saying?"*

*His followers looked around at each other and then back to Creator Sets Free (Jesus). "Some say Gift of Goodwill (John) who performed the purification ceremony," they answered. "Others say Great Spirit Is Creator (Elijah), or even Lifted by Creator (Jeremiah), or one of the other prophets."*

*He then lowered his voice and spoke in a more serious tone.*

*"So tell me," he asked them, "How do you see me? Who do you say that I am?"*

*Silent faces stared back at him. They began to look at each other, and some looked down to the ground. The moment of truth had come, but no one dared to speak. Then suddenly a voice pierced through the silence. "*

*You are the Chosen One," One Who Hears, also called Stands on the Rock (Simon/Peter), answered, "the Son of the living Creator!"*

*Creator Sets Free (Jesus) smiled at him and said, "One Who Hears (Simon), Son of Wings of Dove (Bar-Jonah), Creator's blessing rests on you, for flesh and blood did not help you see, but my Father from above opened your eyes. For this reason I have given you the name Stands on the Rock (Peter - little rock), and upon this great rock (meaning huge rock) I will make my sacred family stand strong. And the powers of the Dark Underworld of Death (Hades) will not stand against them.*

*"I am giving you the authority of Creator's good road from above. The things you do not permit on earth will be what Creator has not permitted in the spirit-world above. The things that you permit on earth will be what Creator has permitted in the spirit-world above."*

*He then instructed his followers not to tell anyone that he was the Chosen One."*

Recently I had a thought emerge while doing some work on my wife's computer, 'what if I could find that perfume that my wife really liked but has not been able to locate' sure enough I found it! There it was in living color on my screen - and in a rare impulsive moment I hit clicked the purchase button! Now something seemed a bit off as the picture changed when I finalized the purchase but I thought 'man if I could find a smaller bottle of what she likes - **I'll be her hero for a day**'. Now normally I would ask her input but I was taking a risk for the reward of being the star student in her life.

It took some time to arrive and finally a bubble package arrived on our doorstep and she said I don't know what that is - its addressed to you. When I picked it up it was light as air and all I could feel was a tiny box...and a tiny box is what it delivered! What I thought was just a 'small' bottle of perfume she

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***Col 1:27b JB Phillips***

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liked turned out to be a literal 'tester' - and I said 'oh man'. Denise asked '**what?**'

So as I approached her in front of her computer I said '**now remember its the thought that counts**' and I handed her this tiny little bottle...at first she smiled looked inquisitively and then could not hold back her belly laugh. Of course she asked 'how much did you pay for that?' and I replied '**it doesn't matter it was too much**'.

I was so deflated when I saw this tiny little bottle...I wanted to be impressive!

- Well it did provide a good laugh for my wife.
- Her husband trying to be her hero - I think she is leaving in on her dresser just to make her smile!

Now the truth is that while I was deflated to give my wife a tiny little bottle - the size of the bottle was never the point.

- **The aroma of the perfume is supposed to be the point.**
- Not what is visible but something invisible yet able to touch the senses. In day to day life perfume is not meant to be seen but something experienced that leaves a pleasant aroma.

I tell that little story on myself to expose a truth that all of us live in a world that give values and worth to impressive ... that often has nothing to do with what is actually true.

- Impressed by power and privilege that we often don't even notice - who cares the size of the bottle of perfume?
- Ours is a world where the 'Impressive' are given the loudest voice to define what is good, beautiful and true.

**The Good news of the gospel is that Jesus came INTO these false systems to reveal what is good, beautiful and true, the Love of God! In a world ruled and dominated by the powerful He comes to reveal the unchanging reality of self giving self emptying love and forgiveness that is not just a bigger sword than the sword of Rome. He is revealing a government that hell cannot overcome healing, restoring and making whole filling the earth with the aroma of life in the face of death.**

In our text Jesus brings His friends to a very specific place - **Caesarea Philippi**. Why?

- Everything about this place is a display of the powers of the day.
- Located about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee at the base of Mt Hermon is the location of the largest spring that feeds the Jordan River. It's abundant water supply makes it a fertile area that also includes that largest waterfall in Israel - and there at the base of Mt Hermon is a beautiful grotto around this spring that emerges from a large cave.

**By the 3rd Century BC** this cave has become a center of Pagan worship to the god Pan (panic).

- Pan is identified as half man, half goat who plays the flute in the woods causing panic.
- The Greeks who are now offering sacrifices to the god Pan so that their life would go well - they have built an open air sanctuary to offer sacrifices near the cave that is now identified as '**the gates of hell**'.

**When Rome takes over Israel and installs Herod** the great as their Jewish ruler over Palestine.

- Herod builds a temple to the ruling emperor Augustus - to recognize the power and dominance of Rome.
- When Herod dies he pass's this portion of his empire to his son Philip the Tetrach who now renames it - a more ego centric name - Caesarea (Caesar) Philippi (himself).

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Now picture this Jesus now stands in the this very grotto that represents the power systems of the day -

- Pagan shrines to the god of Pan at the very gates of hell, offer sacrifice and your life will go well.
- Roman shrines to Caesar - ruled by oppression and injustice - Pax Romana
- And in a city named after the Jewish ruler Philip - his dad built the great temple of Jerusalem that is now the center of Jewish worship based on the law of what is Forbidden and Freed, and if you are really serious about keeping the law like say John the baptist it may cost your life.

**Its here** that Jesus asks...*who do people say I am?*

- And more pointedly - *who do you say I am?*

Much has been made in some Church tradition about Peters confession - ***you are the rock...***

- *little rock upon this great rock...I will make my sacred family stand strong.*

The **Rock is not Peter as a person**, or Peters 'right answer' but rather Peter **rightly locating 'the Messiah'**. Rightly locating Messiah when you are literally surrounded by false 'messiahs' and saviors.

I remember the day when in public school I was handed a text book that was almost like a dream.

- The math book that had math equations listed for us to work out - but in the back of the book? **All the answers to those equations - Yes!**
- Don't tell Mom and Dad - but I may need to consult the back of the textbook to get the answers.....and before we chuckle to much about our past - today the 'back of the book' is on Youtube!

But oh the misery to discover my teacher when she said *sharpen your pencil* because your work **will not be tested on the answer but your work** - you will have to turn in your paperwork showing **how you arrived at the 'right' answer! What?**

I have rehearsed Peters confession with countless folks;

- *'Do you believe Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God?'*
- Beloved that is a good confession - but its a little rock and its not the point is it?

Its one thing to give the right answer - **its another to apply it.**

Here is my paraphrase of Jesus words to Peter and to you and me - *good answer little rock - now show me your work.* Choose to surrender to My leadership when every other system is surrounding you with promises and attempting to inform you about what is good, true and beautiful.

- I am revealing life that is greater and more powerful than all these systems.
- Life that is not dependent on the worlds systems
- Life that is not diminished by suffering - in fact He is going to reveal life through suffering.

Behold I give you the ***Keys of the Kingdom***, must mean power right?

- God is always about bigger and better...not really, in fact in next weeks text we will see that Jesus clarifies what His power is going to do - ***I am going to bind myself in love to your worst - in suffering and death - and be raised on the 3rd day!***

**Who do you say I am?**

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Show me your work...its time to apply the confession beloved.

Maybe like me for you 'confession' has been a 'mostly' Sunday morning kind of confession. Beloved I want to submit that in the changing world we are surrounded by are we going to trust the little rock confession of how much we 'know' or the **Huge rock of surrendering to Jesus leadership** in the present moment of my living.

- The **one-at-a-time** responses of saying yes and allowing Jesus to change our heart and how we actually live.

**Show me your work** - is about addressing the gap between knowing the answer and living the answer - believing that **every real time response to the leadership of Jesus in my life is actually where the Kingdom is revealed.**

Interesting our text begins with Jesus asking 'who do you say I am?' and ends with His strict instructions to His disciples to tell no one He was the Christ.

- Seems almost weird - but maybe Jesus is saying something like this. **Don't just repeat the right answers.**

1. Maybe Jesus was not as interested in the correct answers as He was in **what was being formed in them. The Kingdom.** Interesting thought as Peter goes from 'star' student to 'Satan' in just a few moments. Peter this is not about the right answer this is about an entire shift of how you view life and surrender your life toward.

2. Maybe He is looking at the same in us - our one-at-a-time responses to say 'yes' to self giving self emptying love and forgiveness. **His Kingdom is most visible in us not power systems of success or domination but love and forgiveness.**

*The kingdom comes locally, temporarily, intermittently, episodically in our particular circumstances through what we bind and what we loose. The kingdom comes and is actually here, is really real, whenever we love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, pray for those who abuse us, turn the other cheek to those who strike us, welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive our offender, give to the beggar. (John Caputo, Cross and Cosmos: A Theology of Difficult Glory, 138)*

***The Kingdom is not a reward for these works; the Kingdom is these works.***

Am I actually applying the aroma of the kingdom in my life or am I still thinking about how groovy and big the bottle is?

3. We've each been given the keys of the kingdom, the power to bind and the power to loose.

*We can stand up every day and declare that Jesus is the "Messiah, the Son of the living God" but what difference does that make if we are not loosing people from injustice, racism, hunger, poverty, guilt, shame, fear, anger? What difference does that make if we are not loosing people to go in peace? What difference does that make if we are not binding ourselves to each other in love, compassion, forgiveness, hospitality, healing, hope, prayer? What difference does that make if we are not binding up the broken hearted?*

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I don't want to just give the right answer. I want to be the right answer and to do the right answer amen.

**The Good news of the gospel is that Jesus came INTO these false systems to reveal what is good, beautiful and true, the Love of God! In a world ruled and dominated by the powerful He comes to reveal the unchanging reality of self giving self emptying love and forgiveness that is not just a bigger sword than the sword of Rome. He is revealing a government that hell cannot overcome healing, restoring and making whole filling the earth with the aroma of life in the face of death.**

**Closing Prayer and Communion**

Give us courage to follow the way of your cross,  
and to trust that though it confounds the logic of the world,  
your way interrupts the patterns of sin and death,  
both now and forever.  
Lord enable us to heal the broken systems.  
Equip us with wisdom and foresight.  
May our lives interrupt injustice with your grace.  
Amen

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