



August 23, 2020 Mt. 16: 13-20 & Is. 22: 19-23

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[Zoom Connection](#)

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Stone, Naomi. [Choosing Love as a Way of Life](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [God's Ineffability](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

It must have been terribly difficult for the disciples to integrate all that they were taking in those turbulent days. The meaning of much of what they were receiving was to remain locked up on their hearts and minds until after Pentecost. Only then could they use the key given them to share with others. The key seems to be one of forgiveness. They themselves will have been unlocked from their fears and shame by the love of the Resurrected Christ by then. They each now carried that key into the world with them, and have passed this key on to us as well. God, in Jesus, gives us the key to God's mind and heart. Give before we are asked. Fore-give.

Mt. 16:13-20

13 When Jesus came to the region of **Caesarea Philippi**, he asked his disciples, "**Who do people say the Son of Man is?**" 14 They replied, "**Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.**" 15 But **what about you?**" he asked. "**Who do you**

say I am?" 16 **Simon Peter** answered, "You are the **Christ, the Son of the living God.**" 17 Jesus replied, "**Blessed** are you, **Simon son of Jonah**, for this was not **revealed** to you by man, but by my **Father in heaven.** 18 And 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. 19 I will give you the **keys of the kingdom of heaven**; whatever you **bind** on **earth** will be **bound** in **heaven**, and whatever you **loose** on **earth** will be **loosed** in **heaven.**" 20 Then he **warned** his disciples **not to tell** anyone that he was the **Christ.**

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus gently probes into what the disciples know when he questions the disciples about what people are saying about him. If he asked you this question today, what would you say? What would this tell Jesus?

PRAYER: Teacher Jesus, you gently probe the disciples understanding of who you are by first asking them what others are saying about you. This is much less threatening than asking them directly what they think first. By doing this you can gage where they are at and meet them there. Then you affirm their glimpse, while acknowledging that God was working in their ignorance. Help me as I follow my glimpses to you so as to arrive someday to knowing that you are the Christ. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

CAESAREA PHILIPPI: This was a great place to get away. Jesus has just warned the disciples to be discriminating about what they heard. Knowing how weak their faith was, Jesus needed time alone with them for further teaching.

What made this place ideal for what Jesus wanted to do? Have you ever gone to such a place to gain the time and space for further thinking? If so, where was it, and how did it serve your needs?

WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THE SON OF MAN IS?: Jesus eases into this important discussion by asking what others were saying making it a less threatening way to open the discussion.

Have you ever used this method to elicit information that could be seen as threatening? If so, how did it go?

SOME / OTHERS / STILL OTHERS: Often when we aren't ready to come forth with something we hide behind such as "they say" or everybody thinks". *When was the last time you delayed revealing your true thoughts by doing this? What happened?*

JOHN THE BAPTIST / ELIJAH / JEREMIAH / PROPHETS: All these people were seen to be messengers of God.

What did Jesus learn about the disciples by hearing this answer?

WHAT ABOUT YOU? / WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?: Going deeper into the matter, Jesus now puts the disciples on the spot.

If he were to ask you this today, what might be your answer?

SIMON PETER / SIMON SON OF JONAH / PETER / ROCK: Jesus now connects good old Peter with Jonah (v. 4) who was to be the sign. The ancient Hebrews spoke of self-discovery as “coming to know my name”. To know someone’s name was to know something about the person.

What is Jesus helping Simon, now Peter, now son of Jonah, now rock, know? Do you think Peter understood what Jesus was doing? (See vs.21-23 for a clue)

CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD: Christ is another name for ‘anointed one’ or Messiah’, and unlike the other gods of the day, was seen to be a living reality.

In calling Jesus the Christ the son of the living God, what is Peter beginning to see about Jesus? About himself? About God?

BLESSED: It was believed that only God could bestow blessings.

What is Jesus teaching Peter and the others by using this word?

REVEALED: When something is revealed it is shown for what it is.

Why is the word especially appropriate for this event?

FATHER IN HEAVEN: Saying God is in heaven we are trying to indicate that God-ness not limited by space and time.

Does this way of talking about God work for you? If not, what can you suggest that might work better?

BUILD: Jesus shows that God’s creative process in ongoing and uses the word build to indicate what kind of effort it is.

How is God using your faith life to continue building today? Have you gone through enough changes to necessitate a ‘new name’ by now?

CHURCH: Matthew’s community is writing this gospel in the time of rapid growth and testing. The word church has come to mean the people of God by this time.

Do we share any of challenges today that this early church was facing? Do others recognize us as ‘the people of God’?

GATES OF HADES / KINGDOM OF HEAVEN / EARTH: It was believed that reality consisted of three realms; heaven/ above the earth, earth, and the underworld/Hades. It was felt that they were clearly separate environments.

Is this understanding still relevant? Can you give examples where it is? Examples where it isn’t?

OVERCOME: Jesus promises that good is stronger than evil, when even at times it does not feel like it.

Does this promise comfort you? Did it comfort Peter? (See vs. 21-23)

KEYS: A key is a tool to lock/unlock something so that we can gain access to whatever is contained by the lock.

Does this story provide you a key to unlock something? Once you obtained whatever what was inside the locked container, did you get access to some revelation? Did you achieve any freedom in the process?

BIND / BOUND / LOSE / LOOSE: Peter, and then all the others in chapter 18:18, are given the mind of Jesus on just what is meant by having the key to binding/loosing others.

What burden or freedom does having this ability give? How did Jesus model the use of this ability?

WARNED NOT TO TELL: Jesus knew that the disciples were still too green to go about talking about this experience.

Have you ever gone off ‘half-cocked’ and made a mess because you still didn’t really understand what you were saying? Can this help you understand why Jesus warned them not to talk about this experience yet?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 16:13-16 // Mk. 8:27f; Lk. 9: 18f; Mt. 16:14 // Mt. 14:2; Mt. 16:16 // Jn. 6; 69f; Mt. 16:18 // Jn. 1:42; Mt. 16:19 // Is. 22:22; Rev. 3:7;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Is. 22:19-23; [Ps. 47: 2-9](#); Rom. 11:33-36; Mt. 16: 13-20;

Revised Common Lectionary: Ex. 1:8-2:10; [Ps. 124](#); Rom. 12: 1-8; Mt. 16:13-20;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Francis, a living contemplative, walked the roads of Italy in the thirteenth century shouting, “The whole world is our cloister!” By narrowing the scope of salvation to words, theories, churches, and select groups, we have led many people not to pay any attention to the miracles that are all around them all the time here and now. Either this world is the very “Body of God” or we have little evidence of God at all. This combination of observation along with love—without resistance, judgment, analysis, or labeling—is probably the best description of contemplation I can give. You simply participate in “a long, loving look at the Real.” Richard Rohr

The real business of the Church is not just what is sometimes called ‘surplice work.’ Its business is to bind us together—the learned and simple, the strong and the weak—in a great social act of love and worship; to provide a home for the nurturing of the spiritual life. For we cannot get on alone, in religion or anything else. Our spiritual life must be a social life too. We can each only manage a bit of it—it is far too big and various in its richness for any one soul.... Wonder and love are caught, not taught; and to catch them we must be in an atmosphere where we are sure to find the germs. A living Church ought to be full of the germs of wonder and love.
Evelyn Underhill

Every day people are straying away from the church and going back to God. - Lenny Bruce

The New Testament indicates that [Peter](#) was the son of John (or Jonah or Jonah and was from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee or Gaulanitis.

For Paul, you do not live in the world and go to church. You live in the Church and go to the world. Take off your head, shake it and put it back on; because that was not the way any of us were trained to think. Church, for Paul, is not something you attend. Church is something you organically are—or not! It is more a living organism than a formal organization. You don’t join it as much as you breathe it. He is announcing an existing mystery more than establishing a new institution. Maybe this is exactly what Jesus meant when he said that many who think they are first will be last, and many who think they are last will be first. Richard Rohr: *The Great Themes of Paul: Life as Participation* (CD)

"The church must never become a government factory, carrying on a nationalized industry of religion with the people as the bolts and nuts; with God reduced to the role of cramped advocate of current national policy. Surely the pages of history are replete and the examples in many a foreign country convincing that this kind of church-state union — whatever the original motives, or however noble the original purposes — winds up with a state that is less than stable and a church that is less than sanctified, and with the poor still hungry." -Glenn Archer

The Church is a very human organization but also the garden of God's grace. It is a place where great sanctity keeps blooming. Saints are people who make the living Christ visible to us in a special way. Some saints have given their lives in the service of Christ and his Church; others have spoken and written words that keep nurturing us; some have lived heroically in difficult situations; others have remained hidden in quiet lives of prayer and meditation; some were prophetic voices calling for renewal; others were spiritual strategists setting up large organizations or networks of people; some were healthy and strong; others were quite sick, and often anxious and insecure. But all of them in their own ways lived in the Church as in a garden where they heard the voice calling them the Beloved and where they found the courage to make Jesus the center of their lives. Henri Nouwen

We must choose to listen to God's voice and every choice will open us a little more to discover the new life hidden in the moment, waiting eagerly to be born Henri Nouwen

Gospel of Thomas: Saying 13. Jesus said to his disciples, “Make a comparison and tell me who I am like.” Simon Peter said to him, “You are like a wide man. Thomas said to him, “Master, my mouth will not be able to say what you are like.” Jesus said, “I am not your master. Because you drank, you are drunk from the bubbling spring which I measured out.” And he took him; he went aside. He spoke to him three words. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, “What did Jesus say to you?” Thomas said to them, “If I tell you one of the words which he said to me, you will pick up stones; you will throw them at me. And fire will come from the stones and consume you.” Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1999. Pg. 239.

In a guide book called “De Locis Sanctis: (The Holy Places) it was thought that the “gates of hell” were just north of Sicily. Pg. 62. O’Loughlin, Thomas. [Journeys on the Edges: The Celtic Tradition](#). Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books. 2000.

Elijah is continually blessed as the bringer of good news in Jewish liturgy, preeminently in the grace after meals and the blessings over the Haftarah. He appears in other Jewish liturgy as well. The circumcision chair in a synagogue is known as the chair of Elijah. In the New Testament, Jesus is frequently compared with Elijah, where he is usually understood as a precursor, so as not to cast a shadow on Jesus; role, through the Hebrew Bible outlines an individual, eschatological role for Elijah. Jesus is acclaimed as Elijah (who is still alive because of his assumption into heaven preserved him from death in Mt. 16: 13-23. Segal. Alan F. [Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion](#). NY. Doubleday. 2004. Pg. 633.

Mystics are all those who enter into the Mystery and let themselves be transformed by it, that is, by God. In this sense, every baptized person is a mystic, but that does not mean that every baptized person has a conscious mystical experience. Generally, the mystical experience of the baptized is latent and formless on the level of consciousness and affectivity. More particularly, mystics are those persons who have experienced the revelation of the mystery, thanks to a mysterious divine touch of knowledge, love, light, and fire. Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. [The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies](#). Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002. Pg. 347.

For Christians, one's identity is most decisively shaped in response to Jesus; question: "Who do you say I am?" A "Christian" is a follower of Christ; my identity is ascribed to me in relation to a response of faith. This is in fact the meaning of baptism "Who I am," religious speaking, is enacted by a confessional response to the Christ in the whole of life.

Ochs, Peter, et al Ed. [Christianity in Jewish Terms](#). Boulder CO. Westview Press. 2000. Pg. 349.

- Pg. 148--I will build my church--affirms and identifies Jesus' faith in Peter in God, and his faith in God in Peter.
- Pg. 150--In the end, Jesus simply says that the community of believers in him, the people of the Gospel way of life, who are willing to risk taking him who is the Word at his word are his Church.

Parr, Raymond. [Process Person Presence](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago.1990.

"I am not come to this meaning, or to this work and knowledge through my own reason or through my own will and purpose; neither have I sought this knowledge, nor so much as to know anything concerning it. I sought only for the heart of God, therein to hide myself." Jacob Boehme

In the mid third century, a bishop, Cyprian, lived during a particularly vicious empire-wide persecution under Decius. Cyprian fled to Carthage to rule his church in exile. When he returned in 251 he confronted the problem of those who "lapsed" from the church during the persecution. In dealing with the split that developed in his absence a rival "Pope" was elected. In Cyprian's treatise, "On the Unity of the Church", he used Mt. 16: 18-19 to address the problem. The first and second edition of this document can be found in Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1999. Pages 340f.

Mystical knowledge is real knowledge, but it is "dark knowledge." We know it, but we cannot think it, express it, or even feel it clearly. In that sense, mystical experience is, by definition, always partly ineffable, dark, inchoate, too huge to properly conceptualize and speak about. *Rolheiser, Ronald. [The Shattered Lantern: Rediscovering a Felt Presence of God](#). NY, Crossroad Pub. 2001. Pg. 80*

Within us is the soul of the whole, the wise silence, the universal beauty, the eternal One. Ralph Waldo Emerson

To a preacher who kept saying, "We must put God in our lives," the Master said, "He is already there. Our business is to recognize this. - Anthony de Mello, "One Minute Wisdom"

The first time you consciously inhabit your ultimate place and act from your soul is the first time you can say, "Here" and really know what it means. You've arrived, at last, at your own center. As long as you stay Here, everywhere you go, geographically or socially, feels like home. Every place becomes Here. Bill Plotkin

I cannot live in mediocrity, content with merely knowing that there is more of God to experience and explore -- and then do nothing about it. Truths that are not experienced are, in effect, more like theories than truths. Whenever God reveals truth to us He is inviting us into a divine encounter. - Bill Johnson, "Face to Face with God"

"Emergent" means that it is something greater than the sum of its parts—a new order of relatedness, a new level of consciousness, a deeper and higher perspective that is always unimaginable until the moment it explodes into existence.~ Andrew Cohen

During Paul's lifetime, the church was not yet an institution or structural grouping of common practices and beliefs. The church was a living organism that communicated the Gospel through relationships. This fits with Paul's understanding of Christ as what we might call an energy field, something in which you live inside and participate organically. Paul's brilliant metaphor for this living, organic, concrete embodiment is the body of Christ. Richard Rohr

Often we hear the remark that we have to live in the world without being of the world. But it may be more difficult to be in the Church without being of the Church. Being of the Church means being so preoccupied by and involved in the many ecclesial affairs and clerical "ins and outs" that we are no longer focused on Jesus. The Church then blinds us from what we came to see and deafens us to what we came to hear. Still, it is in the Church that Christ dwells, invites us to his table, and speaks to us words of eternal love. Being in the Church without being of it is a great spiritual challenge. Henri Nouwen

Loving the Church does not require romantic emotions. It requires the will to see the living Christ among his people and to love them as we want to love Christ himself. This is true not only for the "little" people - the poor, the oppressed, the forgotten - but also for the "big" people who exercise authority in the Church. To love the Church means to be willing to meet Jesus wherever we go in the Church. This love doesn't mean agreeing with or approving of everyone's ideas or behavior. On the contrary, it can call us to confront those who hide Christ from us. But whether we confront or affirm, criticize or praise, we can only become fruitful when our words and actions come from hearts that love the Church. Henri Nouwen

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs. 162-166. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/who-do-you-say-i-am>