

The Rev. Joel Petruschke
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Sisters and brothers in Christ, let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. AMEN.

So, sisters and brothers in Christ, I want to begin this sermon with a little bit of a quiz.

What do these folks have in common: Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss...

What do the children's book author Dr. Seuss, actress Kirsten Dunst, and the late baseball player Lou Gehrig all have in common?

Any guesses?

Okay, what do singer John Mellencamp, news commentator Gretchen Carlson, and Robert Cade, the inventor of the sports drink Gatorade all have in common?

Still no guesses?

What do Nobel prize winning chemist Linus Pauling, "Entertainment Tonight" host Mary Hart, and astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler all have in common?

And, finally this one might be a little easier...what do the architect Eero Saarinen ("arrow sar-uh-nin") who designed the St. Louis Arch, and the composer Johann Sebastian Bach, and Travel host Rick Steves all have in common?

Anyone? Well, all of these persons are or were at one time practicing Lutherans.

All of these individuals are among the list of famous Lutherans.

There are others, of course.

Lyle Lovett, Ace Freely of Kiss, Steve Jobs, Dana Carvey, David Hasselhoff, Loni Anderson, Sally Struthers, and so on and so on.

And it is pretty cool to think about all those famous people who have been a part of the Lutheran faith.

It kind of makes us proud to call ourselves a Lutheran, knowing we are in good company.

In fact, the musical group known as *Lost and Found* wrote a song called “The Lutheran Song,” which talks about and lists out a number of famous Lutherans.

Check it out some time. Again, the group is called *Lost and Found*.

But, there is one famous Lutheran in particular that I want to lift up today, namely Albert Schweitzer.

Anyone familiar with that name?

Albert Schweitzer was an amazing man.

And if there was ever a man that fit the definition of a polymath, it is Albert Schweitzer.

A polymath being a person who is accomplished at several things.

A polymath is a person who has a wide-range of knowledge and learning.

A polymath could also be defined as a true Renaissance man.

And this was Albert Schweitzer.

Schweitzer was a music scholar and an very accomplished organist.

But Schweitzer also earned a Ph.D. in philosophy.

And later he earned a Doctorate of Medicine.

And later he went on to become a missionary in Africa.

And in 1952 he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of “Reverence for Life.”

Now any one of these pursuits would have been enough to occupy a lifetime.

And it just goes to show how much one can pack into life if one is so driven.

To be sure, Schweitzer was like that proverb, a rolling stone gathers no moss.

PAUSE

But, why I bring up Schweitzer is not because of these things I have already mentioned.

I bring up Albert Schweitzer because among all these other accomplishments, he also greatly influenced Christian theology.

In particular he wrote a ground breaking book entitled, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*.

The Quest for the Historical Jesus.

And why this book was so earth shattering was that leading up to this book, which was published in 1906...

Leading up to this book there had been a significant movement in Christian theology.

The movement was focused on discovering the “historical Jesus.”

Theologians and Biblical scholars attempted to determine what words and actions, if any, may be attributed to the real life person known as Jesus, and to use those findings to provide an accurate portrait of *the* historical Jesus.

So, what could be gleaned from the Biblical record that one could say is factual, true-to-life, with respect to the person Jesus.

In other words, where can one separate the author’s account of Jesus and the person Jesus himself?

Now, what Schweitzer did was review all the work on the question of the “historical Jesus” starting with the late 18th century.

And he wrote a book on his findings, and his conclusion was this.

Jesus’ image changed with the times AND with the personal proclivities of the various authors.

Jesus’ image changed with the times and with the personal proclivities of the various authors.

In other words, what the authors WANTED to see in the person Jesus is the very thing they discovered in their research, and is the very way then they described the historical Jesus.

The authors prejudiced their own results by the having preconceived notions of who Jesus was.

It would be like doing a science experiment, whereby you enter into the experiment wanting and hoping for a specific result, and so you conduct the experiment and you nuance the results to match your expectations.

That is similar to what these authors were doing when writing their findings about the historical Jesus.

PAUSE

Now, why do I bring this up?

What does this after all have to do with the price of eggs in China, so to speak?

Well, I bring this up, because the same kind of phenomenon happens when we answer that same question today.

In our gospel reading Jesus asks his disciples, "Who people say that I am?"

This question is not so different from the question about the historical Jesus.

Who is Jesus for us? Who is Jesus for you? Who is Jesus for me?

And we see then, this question is an existential question, that is, relating to our personal existence.

This question in fact, "Who do you say that I am?" is perhaps THE existential question.

For how we answer this question has a profound bearing on who we are.

Yes, this question, has just as much to say about who we are, as it does about who Jesus is.

In other words, who we say Jesus is impacts how we go about living our lives.

Let me say that again, who we say Jesus is impacts how we go about living our lives.

For example, consider the disciple Peter.

When asked this question, Peter replies to Jesus saying, "You are the Messiah."

Now, this is important because the “Messiah” was understood to be a military leader that would lead the Jews in an armed rebellion against the Romans occupying their land.

Peter sees Jesus as the Messiah, as a military leader, which is why he protests when Jesus says immediately following this passage that he (Jesus) as the Messiah must suffer and be killed.

Peter doesn’t like that because God’s Messiah would not die but would secure by military means the liberation of the Jewish people.

But, as I noted, who we say Jesus is impacts how we go about living our lives. It is true of us and it is true of Peter.

For think about the scene of Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When Jesus is arrested, according to the Gospel of John’s account anyway, Peter brings out a sword and attacks a slave standing there.

Why does Peter even have a sword to begin with?

We usually think of Jesus’ movement as peaceful, and yet Jesus’ right-hand man, Peter, has a sword.

No doubt, because Peter sees Jesus the Messiah as a military leader, Peter is thinking in the Garden, “Now is the time for Jesus and his disciples to rise up against their oppressors.”

The way Peter sees Jesus impacts how Peter goes about living his life. Jesus will lead a rebellion, and so he (Peter) needs a sword to fight alongside him.

PAUSE

In our daily lives, people all around us answer this question—Who do you say that I am—very differently.

For some Jesus is *a* or even *the* moral example, thus Jesus is “the wise teacher,” and so these individuals live their lives according to the teachings of Jesus, “Be good and love your neighbor.”

And many-a-parent has brought their children to Sunday School with the thought of raising up good and decent, morally sound children.

But is this who Jesus is? Just a moral teacher.

And then, for some Jesus is a judge, the one who hold us accountable to the will of God.

And so, these persons often feel they are never “right” in the eyes of the Lord, and furthermore these persons will often judge others.

But is this who Jesus is? The accuser, the judge.

Still for some, Jesus was the embodiment of grace, the one who generously gave of himself, even his very life on a cross.

And so, these persons live generous lives, giving of their time, and energy, and resources in service to others.

But is this who Jesus is? The great giver.

And some see Jesus as the reconciler, the healer—think of 2 Corinthians 5:18. Jesus the reconciler is how at least in part the apostle Paul saw Jesus, and why then Paul talks about Christians as being called to the ministry of reconciliation.

I would probably fall into this camp as well, which I why I see my ministry as one focused on healing and reconciliation.

But is this truly who Jesus is?

And then some, some individuals are indifferent to Jesus altogether.

Some would say Jesus was just a man who lived and died thousands of years ago.

And as such, many live life indifferent to the world around them. They just go about their daily life, going through a routine.

It is interesting, isn't it? It is really eye-opening to see that often, not always, but often how one answers that question, “Who do you say Jesus is?” informs, or tells something about one's life.

Again think of Peter—Jesus was the Messiah for him, Jesus was a military leader, and so Peter took up arms when following Jesus.

PAUSE

But, Jesus knew, our Lord knew that his disciples wouldn't understand who he was until he died and rose again, which is why he told his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. This is called the Messianic Secret.

Jesus knew that people would not understand that he was a new kind of Messiah, who conquers sin and death, so he didn't want people to proclaim a false message about himself.

Jesus knew people wouldn't fully understand who he was until after the resurrection.

So, who is Jesus? He is all these things we have mentioned and more.

He is the Savior. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

He is our brother and our friend.

He is the Son of the living God.

He is all these things in the world, but who he is for you, is who you say he is.

For what each of us truly believes about who Jesus is does indeed impact how each of us will live our life.

Who do you say Jesus is? AMEN.