

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

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Association Minister Message

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IDENTITY. Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13). What determines our *IDENTITY*? What is unique about each one of us that others know who we are? Do others *IDENTIFY* who we are by our personalities, intellect, character, speech, how we dress, how we act, habits, age, or idiosyncrasies? These traits are observable by others—the outward appearances.

For almost three years, Jesus took a group of social and religious misfits, taught them many spiritual lessons, and showed them the way of God by His love and compassion for others. They followed Jesus wherever He went, observing Jesus in a most intimate manner. The question that Jesus asks is the observable question of His *IDENTITY* from the crowds that followed Him. They report that Jesus is *IDENTIFIED* with spiritual leaders of the past, those who united God with humanity. This “*poll taking*” by the disciples does not require of the disciples any kind of personal commitment to Jesus, just reporting what others are saying. The historical Jesus is just academic and factual.

However, Jesus turns the question around and asks the disciples, “*But who do you say that I am?*” (vs. 15). It is a question that challenges the disciples of every generation to look at themselves and determine who they are, what they believe, and whose they are. It is Peter who answers and claims that Jesus is the “*Messiah, the Son of the living God.*” Peter recognizes in Jesus as the one who brings together past, present, and future in relationship to God and God’s creation. God’s nature is *IDENTIFIED*, known, and experienced in Jesus. In Jesus is known ways of compassion, love, peace, forgiveness, and purpose in life. Who am I and who are we, and what is Jesus calling us to be?

It was not until Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection, that those first disciples finally affirmed who Jesus was. After three years of “*confirmation class*” with their teacher Jesus, the twelve disciples were entrusted with leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ. *IDENTITY* and belonging are necessary for the community of faith in its ministries and missions. Today we are inheritors of that faith as we *IDENTIFY* as the Body of Christ, alive with God’s Holy Spirit. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS*.