



Luke 9:18–22

18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, ‘Who do the crowds say I am?’ 19 They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.’ 20 ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘God’s Messiah.’ 21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22

And he said, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.'

Reflection

In Luke chapter 8 and 9 Jesus has been teaching us about the kingdom of God and God's anointed king, the long promised Messiah whom God has sent to usher in the kingdom and reign over it forever. In other words, Jesus has been teaching us about himself – his identity, his mission and where we fit into his plans for the kingdom. And behind it all is Luke's careful composition. He began with the Parable of the Sower, the parable of the

kingdom *par excellence*. Luke has then set before our eyes encounters with Jesus' mother and brothers, his disciples, a Gentile possessed by a legion of demons, Jairus' recently deceased daughter, a woman suffering menstrual bleeding for twelve continuous years, and a vast crowd of thousands in the wilderness. Through each of these encounters Jesus has taught us about the kingdom of God and himself. He's calmed storms with a word. Demons have trembled before him. He's raised the dead with a touch of his hand, healed sickness with a touch of his garments. And like Moses in the wilderness, the deliverer of God's people from slavery in Egypt to the riches of the Promised Land, Jesus has fed a vast multitude in the wilderness hoping to be delivered from the Romans and have the Promised

Land restored to them.

And twice now Luke has given voice to the question that is on everyone's lips. The disciples asked it first as they sat, shell-shocked in that boat, bobbing up and down on the calm sea of Galilee. Moments earlier, and many of them seasoned fishermen, they'd feared for their lives – the wind and the waves threatening to overturn their boat; only for Jesus to calm the furious squall with a word. Luke 8:25,

In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.'

Who is this? Then Herod Antipas, in Luke 9:9, surveying the commotion that was

once again igniting his lands, he too gives voice to the question that everyone is asking,

Herod said, 'I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?'

In today's passage, Luke brings the question that was racing its way throughout Galilee to a head by setting before us this conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Let me read it to you from Luke 9:18–22,

18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' 19 They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; oth-

ers say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.' 20 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Peter answered, 'God's Messiah.' 21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22 And he said, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.'

Who is Jesus? Who is this one who has utter authority over the natural and supernatural realms, who stills storms and casts out demons with a word? Who is this one who has the power to heal and raise the dead? Who is this one who feeds a mul-

titude with bread from heaven in the wilderness like God did for Israel in a pivotal moment in their history? Some are saying that he is John the Baptist raised from the dead. Others are saying that he is Elijah returned or one of the great prophets of old. But in a moment of clarity, the penny finally dropping, in a climactic moment in the Gospel Peter puts it all together. Until this moment God and demons have recognised Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God but no human has recognised or confessed Jesus as either. Peter finally puts it all together,

20 ‘But what about you?’ [Jesus asks]. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘God’s Messiah.’

It’s hard to overstate the significance of

this title for Jesus. Many of us miss or forget that Jesus Christ literally means Jesus ‘Messiah’. Christ comes from *Christos* the Greek version of the Hebrew word Messiah. What does Messiah mean? It means ‘anointed one’; one chosen, designated, qualified, and consecrated by God for a special task. In the Old Testament, prophets, priests and kings were anointed by God in preparation for their ministry and in many ways Jesus is the culmination of them all, God’s prophet, priest and king *par excellence*. But perhaps most strongly the long promised Messiah, in fulfilment of large swathes of Old Testament prophecy, is God’s anointed king. Texts like 2 Sam 7:12–16; Isa 9:6–7 and Psalm 2 anticipate an eschatological (end-times) king. The Messiah would be the perfect king chosen by God from eternity, through whom God

would deliver Israel to live in peace and tranquillity forevermore. That's why some in yesterday's passage, after the feeding of the five thousand, tried to make Jesus king by force (we read this in John's version of the account). It also explains Jesus response to Peter, verse 21,

21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

If Jesus were to make a public declaration of his identity at this moment, the Romans would have come down upon him and he would have suffered the same fate as John the Baptist. Right now, they're just 15 kilometres from Herod's capital, surrounded by great crowds at fever pitch because of the Passover and a prophet like Moses who's just miraculously fed

them. Five thousand men would make the beginnings of a great army. But God's anointed king hasn't come to dethrone Caesar. He's come to dethrone Satan, sin and death which will happen on the cross, not at the head of a victorious army. And so, confidentially, Jesus begins to explain this to his disciples, verse 22,

22 And he said, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.'

Think & Pray

But for today I'd love you to concentrate on this image of Jesus as king. Listen to

the God speak about him through the prophet Samuel,

I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

Listen to Daniel speak about him,

13 'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that

will not pass away, and his kingdom
is one that will never be destroyed.

Listen to God speak about him and to him,

‘I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.’

7 I will proclaim the Lord’s decree:

He said to me, ‘You are my son;
today I have become your father.

8 Ask me,

and I will make the nations your
inheritance,

the ends of the earth your pos-
session.

9 You will break them with a rod of
iron;

you will dash them to pieces like

pottery.’

10 Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.

11 Serve the Lord with fear
and celebrate his rule with trem-
bling.

12 Kiss his son, or he will be angry
and your way will lead to your de-
struction,
for his wrath can flare up in a mo-
ment.

Blessed are all who take refuge
in him.

Is Jesus your king? Is he king over your life? Is your allegiance to him? Or are you serving two masters? Who is it that you bow down to each day? Is someone or something else ruling and reigning over

your life in place of Jesus?

And what a king we have in Jesus! A king who sacrificed his own life for his people. A king who will never leave or forsake us. A king who right now is preparing a place for us in all eternity at his Father's side. That's my king. Is he your king? Recommit your life to Jesus Messiah this morning in prayer. How can you serve our king in your day ahead?