

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Mark 8:27-38

How many friends do you have? It used to be people could count that on their hands. First of all you had to be around people to be their friends. Secondly you had to have time to spend with them as friends. But now people can have hundreds of friends through the marvel of modern technology. Young people, and even many older ones as well, connect to each other through social media. You get on something like “Facebook” and each day let hundreds of people know what is going on in your life without leaving home and in a few minutes.

What if we could invite God and have Him as one of our “friends.” What might we learn from Him? . . .

How do I search for God? He belongs to no school or company and has no email address. How would we even be able to see a picture of Him? Where do we find Him?

I can check on the internet and google “God.” It will give us all kinds of references to God given by many people all over the years, but what is there from God Himself. I can look at nature, the power of a hurricane or lightning bolt, the vastness of the universe the delicacy of a butterfly’s wings, the intricacies of the muscles just in one of our fingers and the mysteries of the human brain. I can see in those things the God who created Him. But how do we find God?

Wait a minute! I’ve got something.

(Keys in) Who are you?

(The replies on the screen says) **God.**

God? God who?

I am Yahweh, I am who I am. I am God.

Yes, but where do You live?

I am everywhere.

How old are You?

I am eternal. I am ageless.

What do You look like?

I am spirit. I am God almighty.

Okay, if You are almighty, can You get me a job when I graduate? Can You set me up with a date for that girl I’m afraid to ask out? Can You give me a better test result the next time I see the doctor? Can You get me through Physics?

Blocked.

Blocked! Abraham got to talk to God directly. Samson prayed to God, who gave him the power to push down the pillars and destroy all those Philistines. Hannah prayed to God, who allowed her to become pregnant.

David prayed to God, who guided his stone to a bull's eye on Goliath's head. Hezekiah prayed to God, who sent an angel to wipe out the Assyrian army. The early Christian prayed to God, who shook the room they were in. But what do I get from God? Blocked!

(A cross shows on the screen)

What is that? I ask for God, and all I get is that.

Who do you say I am?

I was trying to talk to God. Who are you?

What do other people say about Me?

Oh, You're Jesus. People say lots about You. I see all kinds of stuff in social media about You. Many people say You were a good man, who taught acceptance and was nonjudgmental. They say Christians talk a lot about you, but don't live like You. Millions of Moslems see You as a great prophet. In the lesson people said You were the Christ, the Messiah.

I guess they say You're God.

Who do you say I am?

Does it really matter? What do You have to do with passing grades, paying bills, cleaning up diapers, fighting the flu, getting back my lost investments, and getting married?

I guess You're God.

Who do you really think I am?

Why don't You make it easy for me? Prove it! Pay off my credit card debt. Fast forward me to a beach or ski slope for spring break. Turn the economy around. Put an end to terrorism. Eradicate cancer and AIDS.

I can say You're God, but what does that do for me?

I went to the cross to give you everlasting life.

Okay, that was 2,000 years ago. Politicians promise us better times. Salesmen tell us that they have what we need. The university tells me that students are first. Friends tell me to ask when I need help. But so many of those promises don't come true.

That sounds too easy.

If anyone would come after Me, he must deny Himself, take up his cross and follow Me.

What does that mean?

Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will gain it.

You mean it is not free?

No, it is costly, in fact the most costly thing of all.

So it isn't so easy.

No, it is the hardest thing.

Then what chance do I have?

Follow Me.

Follow You? Hey, there are thousands of people dying in place like Gaza and Yemen because they lack basic needs. The rape of women is accepted in the Congo. The Mexican border is a mess with the drugs cartels and human trafficking. Scientists say that even if we radically change our carbon emissions, we can't stop global warming. Who are you? I want God, a God who will do something for us.

Where are You, God?

(Pause)

God, where are You?

(Pause)

God, who are You?

(Pause)

The computer is okay. Why won't He answer? All I get is silence. It is like beating my head against a wall. I wonder how people who have lost their spouse of 50 plus feel? Or those whose children grow up to be destructive/ Or battered children? Or those paralyzed by depression? This is bad enough.

God! God!

(A cross becomes visible again.)

God?

Who do you say I am?

Oh, it's that Jesus, again. I can't get anything from God, but that Jesus then pops up.

Who do you say I am?

You're Jesus. I know that.

But who am I?

Yes, You're God.

You want to see God?

Yes.

Here I am.

All I see is a cross.

How about this?

(A baptismal shell comes up)

What does that have to do with you?

I came to you first in Baptism.

Now look at this.

(The bread and wine of Holy Communion)

I tell you this is My body; this is My blood.

Now see this.

(Picture of people)

I can't see you.

Look again.

Is this supposed to be "Where's Waldo?"

I still can't see You. I just see people.

You see Me in others.

How?

**In those who hurt and have need.
But especially you see Me in other Christians.**

But where are You when I hurt?

I am with you always.

Yes, You say that, but where are You?

I told you, I am with you.

But that's just words.

Let there be light.

What?

You see light. It is there because of "just words."

All you see, even you are because of words—My words.

Also, when you hurt, I give you people.

Yes, but they are just people.

I'm a person.

Yes, but you're God.

**That's right. But I am also human.
And I come now through people.**

How?

**Where two or more are gathered in My name,
I am with them.**

But why not will everyone?

Whoever loses His sake for My life, will save it.

But why Christians like me, Why not others?

(Pause)

God where are You?

(Silence)

God, I want answers!

(Silence)

(The cross appears again)

Who do you say I am?

Yes, I know You're Jesus.

Follow Me.

Where's God?

Follow Me.

But where? How? When? Why?

Follow Me. . .

God didn't ask, "Who am I?" until He came to us in Jesus. Moses wanted to know, "Who are you?" and only got the answer, "I am who I am." Job demanded that God give the answers Job wanted, but God was only silent. But in Jesus God now asks us, "Who am I? Why? Because if we want an answer from God to the question, "Who am I?" can you imagine the answer? Can we solve pi? Can say exactly where an electron is at a

definite point in time? Can we stop global warming? Can we fix our economy? All of those are like the tiny hills going immediately south of here on Lynn Avenue compared to the Mount Everest of God. If we try to figure God, all we end up with is more questions. That's why Jesus said, "What good would it be for a man if he gained the whole world, but lost his soul?" We could think we had everything figured out. But we'd still come up short. God, who seems hidden to us, becomes even more hidden.

But Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" Then we see the cross. We see Him, a real human being like you and me, going to the cross and taking the punishment for our sins. All the injustices of this world, all that has gone wrong, was placed on His shoulders so He could die with it. In Him God is no longer hidden. We see someone we can trust, someone we can love. We become like the child who sees the outstretched arms of his loving mother and just knows everything will be all right . . .

Who do you say I am.

You are the Christ, God and man, my Lord and Savior.

Follow Me.