

It is amazing that one word could change all eternity. One word. One simple word. What was that word? We'll come to that in a moment. First we must go to Caesarea Philippi where Jesus is asking his disciples' one of the most familiar questions in all the Bible, *"Who do people say that the Son of man is?"*

I doubt that Jesus was really all that interested in what the crowd thought about him. He knew the masses of people are quite fickle and easily led astray. There was a glaring example of this not too long ago on television. The ABC television network carried a program titled **"Pray TV."** Actor John Ritter played the role of an evangelist. Incredibly, some 22,000 people called local television stations wanting to pledge financial contributions to Ritter's work. These figures were verified by various telephone companies who had monitored and logged the incoming calls. Just after a scene in which the evangelist said, **"We need your prayers,"** a fictitious toll-free number was flashed on the screen. **Many viewers around the country tried to phone the number to offer prayers and money.** It pays never to underestimate the gullibility of the American people.

Characters in soap operas tell horror stories about viewers who confuse the actors with the roles they are playing. In 1968, when actor Leslie Nielsen played a brutal sheriff in the television film, he received more than two hundred poison pen letters, mostly from women. Some of these were shockingly vulgar.

Even Spuds Mackenzie, the dog on certain beer commercials, receives an average of five thousand letters a month. Not the trainer, not the sponsor, not the agent, not the handlers. **The dog herself receives the fan mail.**

There are a lot of people who will follow just about anybody who does something different. They remind me of baby ducks. You are probably aware that some baby birds have a strong instinct to follow the first moving thing they see after they are born as though it were their mother. Ducks in Bali have been known to follow a flag stuck on a pole and have stayed within sight of it while they grazed in the rice fields. **That's the way some people are. They will follow almost anything or anybody.**

Jesus wasn't really that concerned about what the masses were thinking about him. Jesus knew that some in the crowds **CHEERING HIM ON...**would later shout the loudest **"CRUCIFY HIM, CRUCIFY HIM!!!"**

So, he wasn't really all that concerned when he asked, "Who do men say that I am?" However, he was concerned when he turned to his disciples and asked them, *"And who do you say that I am?"* Jesus' plan for the salvation of the world lay with this SMALL GROUP OF MEN. **He was building a team that would carry on after he was gone.** The only thing that mattered to Jesus was their opinion. **Who did they think he was?**

My friends, that's Jesus' main concern today. **Who do WE think he is?** It matters little about what people outside these walls think. They are not those who are called to be the light of the world. It matters immensely what you and I think. He is counting on us to offer up our lives in service to the Kingdom. He is counting on us to be about the Father's business in our homes and at school and the office and in all our important relationships. What we think about him is of vital importance. It will determine the level of our loyalty and the intensity of our commitment. **Who do you say Christ is?**

There are three things we could say about Jesus this morning that are absolutely essential.

FIRST OF ALL, HE IS THE STANDARD BY WHICH OUR LIVES MAY BE MEASURED.

In one of his books Haddon Robinson tells about a series of victory parades planned by General Pershing through many European capitals after World War I. He needed 27,000 soldiers to march in those parades. **Each participant was to have two qualities.** He was to have an **unblemished military record,** and second, **he was to stand at least one meter, eighty-six centimeters tall.**

Forty American soldiers, guarding an ammunition dump about one hundred miles from Paris, read with interest the notice about Pershing's victory marches. Each man in the company met the first qualification. The second condition, however, puzzled them. **They did not know how high one meter, eighty-six centimeters was.**

Since nobody in camp knew how tall that was, they began to compare themselves with one another. They stood back to back like children in a kindergarten until they knew the tallest through the shortest men in the company.

Slim, the tallest, figured he had it made. He kidded his buddies about taking a look at the girls in the capitals and sending back picture postcards. Shorty, on the other hand, knew that if he qualified, everyone else would, too. When a captain from headquarters arrived to find out if anybody qualified, the soldiers told him their problem, "We don't know how tall one meter, eighty-six centimeters is." So he translated the meter and centimeters into feet and inches and made a mark on the mess hall wall.

Some of the men looked at that mark and turned away, knowing they could not measure up to it. Others stood up against the wall, but they fell short of the mark by an inch or more. Finally Slim stretched himself as tall as possible, but he fell one-quarter of an inch short. **Not one of them came to the six feet, one and one-fifth inches that one meter, eighty-six centimeters represents.**

It is easy, isn't it, to feel good about ourselves and our accomplishments when we use other people as our standard? **But what happens when we measure ourselves to Jesus?** Do we love as he loved? Are we able to forgive as he forgave? Could we lay down our lives not just for our friends, but even for our enemies? **When we use him as our standard, it is harder to measure up.**

IN THE SECOND PLACE, HE IS THE EMBODIMENT OF ALL THAT HE HAS TAUGHT TO US AND OTHERS.

This is why he is worthy to be our standard. His very nature was LOVE, TRUTH & RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A study was done recently about how people attain a permanent place in the memories of their countrymen.

For example, of the thousands of past major league baseball players, only a few are remembered. Ask several people to name the most famous baseball players of all time and they are likely to say Ruth, Cobb, and Gehrig. The same question is asked about music; they will say Beethoven, Armstrong, Bach, Holliday, Presley, Jackson, and the Beatles are the best. All of these celebrities have earned a permanent place in our memories as a people.

Historically, there have been several routes by which people have reached this status. There are those who were "first or the most." Some people established a place in history because they were the first to do something. Charles Lindbergh earned a permanent place in history as the first to make a nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic. Sir Edmund Hillary was the first to climb to the top of Mount Everest. The Guinness Book of Records thrives on publicizing people who achieved the first or the most.

Others are remembered because they are connected with a great event. Abraham Lincoln's fame rests partly on the fact that he freed the slaves and led the nation during a great war. He would not likely have become as celebrated a president had he served during peacetime. Paul Revere owes his fame to his fateful ride when he realized "the British were coming." **YES, IT IS EASIER TO MEASURE UP TO THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT SOMETHING FOR US TO MEASURE UP TO.**

Now consider our Lord. Jesus' teachings are the finest ever recorded, but we are not here this morning because he was a great teacher. Jesus had a way with crowds. The common people heard him gladly. But we are not here because of his public speaking. He was a great healer. He healed the blind, the lame, those with serious emotional disturbances. But that's not why we are gathered in worship. **We are here because of who Jesus was or better yet, who he is today.** It is his very nature that has brought us together. Emerson once wrote: *"Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful we must carry it with us or we find it not."* Jesus' very nature was beauty. All that he taught, he embodied.

OF COURSE THAT WAS EASY, BECAUSE OF WHO HE WAS.

Simon Peter knew. It was he who finally answered Jesus' question. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," he said. That is our answer as well. He is the Christ. He is the One sent from God. He is the Lamb that was slain before the foundations of the world. He is our Lord, our Savior, and our Master.

William J. Bausch tells a story that says it as well as it can be said. **The story says that God created the heavens**

and earth and everything in them. He created them BY HIS “WORDS.” God said, *"Let there be light,"* and there was light. **This happened with everything.** God was proud of His work. He was especially proud of the man and woman which He made.

But the devil was jealous and angry. One day when God was enjoying the man and woman, the devil slithered up to God and asked him why he liked those strange human creatures so much. When God opened His mouth to speak, the devil craftily put a bond upon God's tongue. **God could not speak, not even one word!** Since God's creative power was in His WORDS, the sly old devil had bound God's power.

The devil laughed at God and then proceeded to corrupt man and the woman. **Eons went by, and the devil came back to scoff at the silent God and mock Him.** God responded to this by holding up one finger. "One?" asked the devil. **"Are you telling me that you want to say just one word?"** God nodded. The devil, thought, *"I suppose that even God could not do much with just ONE WORD."* So the devil removed the bond from God's tongue.

Then God spoke His one word in a quiet whisper. He spoke it for the man and the woman. ***It was a word that gathered up all the forgiveness, love, and creativity God had stored up in His heart during His long silence.*** **His one word was "JESUS."** And that is the **“WORD”** that changed everything.

John tells us in the prologue to his Gospel, *"In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God...and the word became flesh and dwelt among us."* Yes, that **ONE** word was JESUS. That is who he is, and that is why we sing his praise, and that is why we serve him in our daily lives. ***Who do you say he is?***

Your response makes all the difference in the world. **He is the standard by which we measure our lives, he is the embodiment of all that he taught us and he is the “WORD of God—HUMAN BECOMING FLESH!!!**

YES, THAT IS WHO HE IS!! He is our Savior, our Master, and our Lord. **He is the “ONE WORD” that promises us.... A full and Complete Life in this world with God.** Amen.