

Sermon for Pentecost 17 – September 16th, 2018
Pastor Russell Britton

Isaiah 50:4-9a

4 The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens— wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. 5 The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. 6 I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. 7 The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; 8 he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. 9 It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty? All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

James 3:1-12

*1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. 4 Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, 8 but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. **10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water?** 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.*

Mark 8:27-38

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. 31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." 34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

“Who Do You Say...?”

For proclamation this good day I went with a manner of presentation called Pecha Kucha. With such a visual component this transcript of the sermon is hindered by not seeing the images I used. I have tried to give the gist of the images used and hopefully the questions still stir faithful reflection.

Pastor Russ 9/17/18

1. Image: Camera lens by human eye - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kb-a/49166736/>
Good morning. We try to develop our aptitudes and abilities. We try new things to learn and challenge ourselves. In that spirit, the sermon this morning I offer is a Pecha Kucha. A pecha [PECH uh KOOCH uh] kucha is 20 slides, each of which is 20 seconds. Images, not text which draw out reflections.
2. Image: Target
Our development is a function *and* capacity of our sight – not only of eye or tool – but also of heart as to what God has *called us to be and do*. That endeavor requires of us focused self-reflection which hones our aim. So, when Jesus asks who do you say I am, we also look at...
3. Image: Standing Mirror
...ourselves. Do we like what we see? What does the mirror show? How are other people a mirror of who we are? Considering Jesus’ disciples, how does the company we keep reflect the convictions and pursuits we hold dear? While some things about ourselves we hold close...
4. Image: Name Tag i.e. *Hello, My Name Is...*
Others cannot help but be very public. Who do we TELL others we are? What labels do we live? Are there labels that have been given to you that are hurtful or unfair that *you... should... release?* Is God’s love for you rooted in your identity?
5. Image: Man shouting through megaphone
How assertive are we about telling others what makes us who we are? It would seem Jesus was comfortable being vulnerable. After all he asked the disciples, who do people say that I am? But us? Sometimes we are afraid of being...
6. Image: Scale
...judged. Why DO we worry so much about what others think of us? Ever asked *your* friends who do you say I am? When you sing the classic song Jesus Loves Me, do you believe it? What does God find lovable about you? Really, this is one big exercise in imagination and curiosity.
7. Image: Tightrope Walker
And that can be risky. It can be precarious to step out and ponder identity. Our own identity sure. But the identity of anyone who would be a formative influence in our lives. But with risk engaged wisely comes reward.
8. Image: Jesus Icon
So a first little step. When Jesus asks, who do **you** say that I am – how would **you** answer that? Would it make a difference if Jesus was looking... straight... at... you? Are there certain people it would be difficult for you to answer in front of? Would you describe Jesus...
9. Image: B/W Mtns & Color Mtns
...in basic black and white? Binary terms of good/bad? Or does your explanation and experience of Jesus have the complexity of experiences and encounters with the vibrancy of shades of color? How would that contribute to clarity about who you say Jesus is?
10. Image: Orange 5 Pool Ball
God has given us many gifts to perceive our world. Let’s look briefly at five given us that we might delight in God *and* seek to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
11. Image: Phoropter www.flickr.com/photos/nationaleyeinstitute/7544453592
God gives sight. Our vision. What we can see. Who of you can recall a first vision appointment when the knobs twist and you see better than you realized you were seeing?! The lenses we see through, can help us see things anew and wonder at what God can do.

12. Image: Bells http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Animal_bells.jpg
God gives hearing. What noises and sounds engage you? Music and song, voices of loved ones, as we listen what rings true about God? What rings true about you? Even if not as well as in an earlier season of life, what we hear affects what we hold dear.
13. Image: Collage of dinner tables
God gives taste. We receive the delight of being nourished. We receive the pleasure of flavor. We receive getting to know one another through the joy of meal fellowship. Holidays or regular days – the way we eat speaks to the God we meet.
14. Image: Several photos of fur
God gives touch. Our nerves give us sensation and differentiation between soft and hard. Dry and wet. Hot and cold. Skin, scales, or fur. How does God give us what we feel – literally and figuratively. What does that say about who God is?
15. Image: Several photos of flowers
God gives smell. God gives us scents. ☺ May we perceive them gratefully. And of those smells we favor, why is that? Fragrances can take us places with the briefest of a whiff. In ways they can delight, in ways they can warn – think danger or spoilage. Beyond our senses...
16. Image: ELCA logo & Luther's Crest
What does our theological tradition and our respective upbringings offer us about who God is? A key verse for Luther was Ephesians 2:8: We are saved by grace through faith. How and where does grace appear in the life of Jesus? In our own lives? And let us consider the sacraments.
17. Image: Coffee beans & cup of coffee
Well, no this isn't a Lutheran sacrament. But it does bring to light a *sixth* sense that is important in a life of faith. The sense of caffeination. No, of course I mean a sense of humor. But really to the *actual* sacraments.
18. Image: Bread and wine on altar
Holy Communion. Eucharist. Where God gives God's self. Through bread and wine and God's Word, God's abundant gift of grace is given, and we engage the question – who do you say that I am?
19. Image: Font
Holy Baptism. God washes, names, and claims. God marks us with the cross of Christ and, by the grace of God, we are changed. Covered by water and God's promise, we engage the question – who do you say that I am?
20. Image: Praying Hands & Jesus
So the question, "Who do you say that I am?" is about Jesus but also about A LOT more. Through our thinking, our daily living, our prayers, our service of, with and for our neighbor, our disciplines of self-care or lack thereof, our worship, we *LIVE* the answer to Jesus' question: Who do you say that I am? May we live a worthy witness. Amen

Formative Thought found at <https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=5220>

"Because, "Who do you say that I am?" is at the same time, "who will you say that you are?" That's the rub of this question, the heart of its difficulty. If it we only had to provide an answer to Jesus' question of his identity, that would be one thing. However, answering the question of Jesus' identity is also having to give voice to our own." Karoline Lewis, Luther Seminary