

“WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THIS?”
Isaiah 53:1-12, I Kings 19:8-13, Matthew 8:23-27
May 2 & 3, 2020

In our world today, there are many questions with regard to who Jesus is, what His purpose was, and what significance He has for our everyday lives. Many are asking, “So, why do I need to have Jesus a part of my life? What difference does Jesus make? Can’t I live a perfectly normal life without Jesus?”

These are all very valid and important questions. So because of the situation we are in today, because there is growing question about the significance of our own lives, I’ve decided to give a six week sermon series concerning the important question about Jesus, “Are You The Christ?” Involved in this are six questions about Jesus, asked directly **of** or **to** Jesus that will guide us in our consideration of who Jesus is for us today. So today we start out with the question, “What Manner of Man is This?” asked by the disciples in Matthew 8:23-27. Listen to the question as it arises out of this Scripture passage. (READ Matthew 8:23-27).

We see that a storm is what precipitates this question about Jesus. Jesus was in the city of Capernaum on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Now, the Sea of Galilee is a little smaller than Lake Winnebago here in Wisconsin, but it is much deeper. While Lake Winnebago is only about 25 feet deep, the Sea of Galilee is 141 feet deep.

The Sea of Galilee, often referred to as Lake Galilee, is the lowest freshwater lake in the **world** at around 700 feet below sea level (the Dead Sea is the lowest lake). It is surrounded by mountains that are situated in such a way that winds whip through and across the lake it as if in a wind tunnel. That means that storms can arise over the Sea of Galilee very quickly and without much warning.

During His stay in Capernaum, Jesus had been healing many people, and He calls His disciples to take Him to the other side of the Sea, over to the east side, near Gadara. As they start out everything seems to be fine, but as they cross over in the boat, a storm comes up quickly and catches them out in the middle of the 8 mile wide by 13 mile long Sea.

Now you have to remember that many of Jesus’ disciples were experienced fishermen. They

made a living out on the Sea of Galilee, so they were seasoned mariners. But as they were caught up in this great storm, even those who made a livelihood from the Sea, became frightened of the wind and the waves. Matthew's Gospel describes it as a fierce, or great storm, which means very high winds creating tremendously high waves. It was probably something like what we experienced here in Sheboygan this last Wednesday, which produced 6-8 foot waves on Lake Michigan. Now, when you are in a smaller boat, those are significantly dangerous waters. The boat was large enough to hold all twelve disciples and Jesus, so it was a good sized boat, but in a storm like that, it would certainly be in danger of capsizing or flooding with water. This was one nasty storm, and the disciples were scared silly.

But the amazing thing about this whole event is that when the disciples woke Jesus up, He stands up and tells the wind to cease and the waves to stop, and everything becomes calm as quickly as it had started. It is at this particular time when the disciples ask this first question of Jesus, "*What manner of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!*" (Matthew 8:27).

What manner of MAN is this, indeed? **First** of all, we must understand that **JESUS WAS A MAN**, human in every form such as we are. When He became tired, He slept. When He became hungry, He ate. When He was cut, He bled; when He was sad, He cried; when things weren't right, He got angry. Yes, He even went to the bathroom and had to bathe Himself, and wash His clothes. Jesus was completely human – perfectly human but none the less, human.

Yet, we often forget about that fact. Because Jesus was fully God incarnate here in this world, we often think of Him being only fully divine, perfect in every way. We forget that while Jesus is fully God, He is also fully human. "Much of our so-called religious art pictures Jesus as a plastic figure with a weak countenance and a pretty profile – a sort of first-century model for men's shirts. In addition, Jesus comes out looking very un-Semitic – a blue-eyed Anglo-Saxon from Birmingham, England, rather than a dark-eyed, dark skinned progeny of Bethlehem," Israel (R. Benjamin Garrison, *Are You The Christ?*, Nashville: Abington Press, 1978] pg. 17).

So it is easy for us to de-man Jesus and make Him only a deity. And when we do that, it is so

easy for us to convince ourselves that His temptation in the wilderness was not really a temptation because He was God, not a man. Likewise we are likely to believe that His sufferings on the cross were actually some sort of divine playacting – no real pain, no suffering involved, it was all just a show, a spectacle for us to be deceived by. He was God, we rationalize, so how could He possibly undergo such treatment and injustice?

But our Apostle's Creed and the other creeds of faith were written precisely to remind us that Jesus was born, suffered, was crucified dead and buried. "Jesus was born as other children were...He suffered under Pilate, as many had...He was crucified – painfully, inhumanly – like a common criminal...every phrase placed in the creed in order to strengthen the certainty that Jesus was fully human" (Garrison, *Are You the Christ?*, pg. 18). If Jesus were just God showing up here on earth for a short visit, **then** the whole foundation of Christianity crumbles into dust and becomes a myth just like the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome. If Jesus did not share our humanness, He could not have shared in our plight and there would be no hope for us. We would be left to our own devices without any meaning or purpose or measure of confidence in standing before God as anything but guilty of His wrath and destruction.

But because Jesus **IS** human, come into this world to be like us in order that we might be like Him, we see that He is our ultimate example of what we were called to be as God's creation. Because He is human like us, except for sin, we have a real-life model of the power and potential and perfection that we are called to be as humans. To be the Savior of the world, Jesus had to be, and is, fully human.

And we heard this in our Old Testament lesson of Isaiah 53. Isaiah states clearly that the Suffering Servant was "*...despised...and rejected...he endured suffering and pain...that should have been ours...that we should have borne. He was...beaten because of the evil we did. He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly...He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die...put to death for the sins of our people*" (53:3-5, 7-8). Because He came to be our Savior, Jesus had to be just like us so that He could endure the harsh treatment that we deserved, thereby cancelling our penalty for our sin.

Having established that Jesus was human, a man in every way, yet without sin, let us continue to what else this question discloses about “What Manner of Man is This?” We see in this account of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee with His disciples that **Jesus is a confident man**. As the winds howl and the waves crash over the boat, Jesus is in the back of the boat sleeping. While the disciples are anxiously trying to keep the boat upright and floating, Jesus sleeps in the stern without a care in the world.

It is at this point that the disciples, having come to the end of their wits trying to save the boat, call out to Jesus saying, “*Save us Lord! We are about to die!*” (Matt. 8:25). “...*Don’t you care that we are drowning?*” (Mark 4:38). The disciples were so focused upon the intensity of the storm that they lost all confidence in the One whom they had as a passenger. While the storm rages, Jesus is in the back of the boat, asleep with His head on a pillow. Just picturing that makes me question why the disciples were so upset. If Jesus could sleep through the massive storm without a care to worry about, couldn’t the disciples also have had confidence?

But Jesus knew why He was here on the earth. He knew that His purpose here was to bring Salvation to everyone who would believe in Him. And because He knew what had to take place, He also knew that a storm was not the thing that would take Him out of this world. He would have to endure another series of events that would accomplish bringing salvation to the world.

But what we see is the disciples resorting to “panic prayer.” You know, the prayers that we lift up to God in the middle of upsetting times. We pray, “Lord, if you’ll get me through this then I’ll...” Or “Lord, get me out of this mess and I promise I’ll never again do...” I know each one of us can relate to this kind of prayer, because when we are in a fix that’s outside of our control, we bargain with God and try to manipulate Him to do what we want, with the promise that we’ll change our lives IF ONLY God will perform for us. Sorry folks, this does not show confidence, but a lack of confidence in Jesus. So it is right that Jesus responded to them, and us, “*What little faith you have*” (Matt. 8:26).

So many times when we are in conditions beyond our control, we want to just give up. We think that if we cannot control this event in our life, then we can’t control anything in our life, and we just

give up, to the point that we become useless. Because of the magnitude of the stuff that surrounds us, we give up thinking, or trying, or even praying and we become paralyzed. We find our confidence poured out of us and we lose our nerve to do anything worthwhile.

But that's not Jesus! Jesus desires to build our confidence in Him so that we can take on the struggles and trials of life knowing that He has the power and authority to make the unthinkable happen, IF ONLY we believe in Him. He neither underestimates difficulties nor did He overreact to them. He was confident in all that God could do through Him for us.

And that leads us to the second aspect of "What manner of is this;" **Jesus was a calm man.** During the raging storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calmly sleeps in the back of the boat. Contrasting the raging storm with the calm He called for after they woke Him up, the Gospel accounts help us to see that there is possibility of being afraid at both ends of the spectrum. Luke's account tells us that when the calm came over the sea after Jesus' command, "*they were amazed and afraid...*" (Luke 8:25).

Afraid of the calm? How can that be? Let me ask you this, "How many of you became afraid when the "safer at home" mandates came out? Your lives were furiously busy, a variable storm of activities, yet the sudden calm that came when everything stopped brought fear, didn't it?" Everything was different. Your routines suddenly stopped. The noise and confusion and howls of the stuff that needed to be done were suddenly put to an end, and the sudden calm of staying at home brought fear - fear of the unknown, fear of the future, fear of the what-ifs, and fear of the how longs. And what would happen if there was no TV, no computer access, no radio or no telephone? That sudden calm and quiet forces us to face ourselves in a completely different way.

The hurricanes of life can certainly bring great fear to us, but so can the sudden calmness. When we are faced with having only ourselves to live with, there can be great fear. Many people prefer the hustle and bustle of life just so that they don't have to live with themselves. The calm, quietness facing them is overwhelming. They prefer to have some storm to battle in their life – the kids, the job, the future, the competition – rather than face the utter silence of life.

Elijah faced this tremendous calm in his life (I Kings 19:8-13). He had faced the stormy competition of all the 450 priests of Baal up on Mount Carmel after challenging them to a test to prove who was the real God – the God of Baal, or the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had boldly professed his faith in the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He stood firm in the face of the false religion supported by Queen Jezebel. And when the test was over, and the priests and prophets of Baal were dead, the contract put out on his life by the queen sent him running. And when he arrived at Mount Sinai, surrounded by the utter silence of facing his fear of the calm, God spoke to Him, not in the wind, the fire, or the earthquake, but in the still small voice.

Against all this storm of activity and fear of the quiet, stands the calm, and the calming Son of Man, Jesus. He, and He alone, brings peace to us when everything else around us brings fear or worry or anxiety. Jesus told His disciples, *“Peace is what I leave with you; it is My own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid”* (John 14:17). So He is not only a man of peace, but gives us peace so that we can calm the fear that rises in us during either the storms or the calms of life. Jesus is the person of pervasive and pervasive calm. He is our source of peace so that we have nothing to fear.

A third aspect of “What manner of Man is this”, brings us to understand that **Jesus was a compassionate man**. Compassion is the essential characteristic of God. God loves us and cares for us and desires that we trust Him. When we fall away from Him, He doesn’t immediately reject us, but carefully, persistently and compassionately seeks us out again. Like the shepherd that finds a sheep missing from his flock, searches for it until he finds it and rescues it from danger to restore it back to the flock, so God continues to bring us back into His presence so that we might enjoy His peace and His abundance. God is a compassionate God. And Jesus embodied this in His life here on the earth.

Many of the parables and teachings that He gave teaches us about compassion and the importance of having compassion in our lives. The Parable of the Good Samaritan, the Parable of the Prodigal Sons, and the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard are a few of the lessons Jesus taught

about compassion for one another, and for the compassion of God toward us. The miraculous healings that Jesus did showed His compassion on those who were sick and hurting. Even the raising of the dead demonstrated the love that Jesus had toward those who were deeply filled with sorrow. Jesus lived a life of compassion. Even at the crucifixion, Jesus had compassion on those who hung Him on the cross, saying, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34).

Here on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus had compassion on His disciples because of their fear. He doesn’t chastise them or belittle them because they are afraid of the storm. Rather, He calls out to the wind to be still and commands the waves to stop and brings peace to the sea. Even in His words after everything became calm, Jesus merely asked the disciples, “*Where is your faith?*” (Luke 8:25). He saw their fear and He had compassion on them, and then touched their lives with His peace.

You see, the word *compassion* means “to suffer along with,” suffering with another or others who need our strength and substance. We see it lived out clearly as we see folks caring for the needs of those on the front lines of this coronavirus pandemic. Food is being sent to the hungry and poor; thanks are being given to the front-line workers; phone calls are being made to the shut-ins; support is being given to those suddenly unemployed; and corporate donations are being made to meet the needs of sick. What a horrible place this world would be if there was no compassion shown to one another? As we are deliberately demonstrating support and encouragement to one another, we are showing compassion as Jesus demonstrated it to us. And we are to show that compassion toward the White House, the state house, and to the city hall as much as we demonstrate that compassion here in this church house. Let us stand up beside each other, to suffer along with one another, and tend to the needs of one another, here and throughout the whole world, so that all might see the love of God through Jesus.

What manner of Man is this? The fourth aspect of the Master we see that **Jesus is a calling man**. Jesus is not only a confident man, a calm man, a compassionate man, but He is also a calling man.

An important observation to be made is the reflection of who Jesus, the Master Man, is and who He is calling each of us to become. “There is little sense in asking what kind of person Jesus is unless

we are willing to make the answer foundational for the kind of persons we are willing to be, by His grace. That is the reason I speak of Jesus as a calling person.” (Garrison, *Are You the Christ?* Pg. 24). Jesus lived His life as an example for us to model in our own lives, so as we seek to find out who Jesus is, it is vital that we also consider following His example for our very own lives.

So let me ask you this – “Have you ever thought of God being a verb?” There is nothing stagnant about God, but throughout the Scriptures we see Him moving, working, encouraging, challenging, and actively involved in the lives of the people of the world. We come to know who God is based upon what He has done and what He does even today. He loves, judges, sustains, encourages, warns, graces and He saves us through Jesus Christ. These are all verbs demonstrating the depths of which God goes to meet us in the midst of our struggles with our sins, in our seeking Him, in our hoping for meaning in life, in our loving one another, and in our developing faith. And because God is interacting in each of our lives, He desires that we also become Christ’s active verbs, interacting and influencing the lives of others for Him.

Jesus’ commands are always distressingly specific, telling us to leave your nets (Mark 1:18), pick up your bed (John 5:8), sell your goods (Matthew 19:21), bear your cross (Mark 8:34), love your neighbor (Luke 10:27) and go to the other side (Matthew 8:18). Not all of these are easy to do, but Jesus calls us to trust Him so that He can lead us to something better.

I love the old story about the tight-rope-walker showing his skill walking over Niagara Falls. A crowd of people were there to watch him, and he thrilled them as he walked back and forth across the cable. But to their amazement, he then took up a wheelbarrow, and looking to the crowd announced, “Who thinks that I can take a person in this wheelbarrow across the falls?” Having seen him walk the rope already, everyone cheered. He then said, “Then who will get in and go with me?”

You see, it’s one thing to come to understand who Jesus is, but it is another thing to act upon this knowledge and get into the wheelbarrow and let God push us wherever He wants you to go. So let us follow Jesus’ calling, and not only hear His call, but obey His call and go with Him. Amen? Amen.