



What do you think of Christ? In St. Matthew 16:13-16 Jesus asks the disciples **“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”** The disciples answer, “John The Baptist, others Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Then Jesus said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** Simon Peter replied, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

What about you, what do you think of Christ? Do you have faith in Christ as your Savior? Discussions of religion today can be controversial. There seems to be as many opinions about who Jesus is as there are people in this world. Past differences in religion were defined by the various denominations. Now, sadly, some construct their own views of religion and form their own belief systems. Some will say it doesn't matter what you believe, just so that you believe. Believe what? A few years ago, our Synodical President presented a short video at the ND District Convention in Minot. The video was filmed in southern California. Ten people were asked who is Jesus? Nine of the ten either did not know or could not describe Jesus as Savior. One out of the ten described Jesus as “being a good person.”

The statement “it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe” is not a word of comfort. The devil and his legions believe in God because they know that God truly does exist. Yet, the devil and his evil angels do not have saving faith. To say it's good to believe in something, anything, is not saving faith. This may not be that important in a small congregation. Yet, there is the influence of the devil, the sinful world and our own sinful flesh. When God's Word is neglected the sinful heart is susceptible to the influence of the world in which we all live. Jesus asked the question “Who do people say that the Son of Man is” because it is important to know Christ as Savior, “The Christ, the Son, of the Living God.” To simply look at Jesus as a good man, a great social reformer, a great humanitarian, or even a popular politician who gives away free food (Feeding the 5000) is not saving faith.

We might not feel that we think in this way but the reality is that we are all vulnerable to the notion that as “long as we believe” all is well with our soul. We are reminded by the questions Jesus asks of His disciples of the importance of knowing who Christ is and that what we think of Him is equally important as our view of Him can affect our faith. To be sure, **“...Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” Hebrews 11:1.** Faith is confidence and complete trust in Christ as Savior. Faith must have knowledge of Jesus as Savior (which the Scripture gives to us) but must also truly believe that Christ has died and rose again for us while knowing that Jesus is true God/Man. To look at Jesus any other way than as Savior takes the focus off of His work of salvation on the cross which opens us up to the notion of salvation through some other means, namely our own good works. Every person is prone to these thoughts and beliefs because of our sinful human nature. We need God's pure grace given to us in Christ to believe and have faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

To know Christ as Savior does not come naturally but must be given to us by God's grace as Ephesians 2:8-9 makes so very clear. We are saved by God's grace through Christ. We need to continue in God's Word in the Divine Service. We need the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ to build each other up to strengthen us as we receive Christ's body and blood together as the Word and Sacrament give us forgiveness and strengthen our faith. To recognize Christ as Savior comes from the Word, by God's grace as the Word comes to us and the Holy Spirit works faith and continues to keep us in faith.

Christ Jesus is our Savior who died on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day, that we would be forgiven and given life and eternal salvation. Our confession is the same as Peter's. We believe that **“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Why? Because Jesus does the Father's will, is sent by the Father to **“Seek and save the lost” St. Luke 19:10b.** Jesus is not mere man to be remembered in only a vague kind of way for being a social reformer or as a good man. He is the God/Man, the Word Incarnate (St. John 1:14), the God who comes in human flesh and is the Savior of the world.

O Word of God Incarnate, O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging O Light of our dark sky
We praise Thee for the radiance That from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps, Shines on from age to age.