

Discipleship: Ministry to the Bound by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Pentecost Litany based on Psalm 8

Leader: When I look at your heavens,

All: the work of your fingers,

Leader: the moon and the stars,

All: which you have set in place,

Leader: what is man that you are mindful of him,

All: and the son of man that you care for him?

Leader: We worship you, Lord, In the name of the Father and The Son and
The Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 51:1-3

Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness
and who seek the Lord:

Look to the rock from which you were cut
and to the quarry from which you were hewn;

² look to Abraham, your father,
and to Sarah, who gave you birth.

When I called him he was only one man,
and I blessed him and made him many.

³ The Lord will surely comfort Zion
and will look with compassion on all her ruins;
he will make her deserts like Eden,
her wastelands like the garden of the Lord.

Joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

Deuteronomy 32: 1-4

Listen, you heavens, and I will speak;
hear, you earth, the words of my mouth.

² Let my teaching fall like rain
and my words descend like dew,
like showers on new grass,
like abundant rain on tender plants.

³ I will proclaim the name of the Lord.
Oh, praise the greatness of our God!
⁴ He is the Rock, his works are perfect,
and all his ways are just.
A faithful God who does no wrong,
upright and just is he.

Matthew 16:13-20 ¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

“Who do you say I am?” – Matthew 16:15

Jesus and His disciples have traveled through the vastness of God’s creation encountering new cultures and ways of thinking. There is the constant pressure of the Pharisees and other religious leaders. And at the same time they encounter the various other pressures of everyday life.

Jesus pauses to ask the disciples what is it that they are hearing about Jesus. Who do people say that I am? Even those disconnected from religious life are seeing Jesus as some type

of prophet, perhaps Elijah or even John the Baptist come back from the dead.

How do we answer Jesus' question today? Who do the people in your life say that Jesus is? A teacher or an example to be followed. A little bit of Jesus can't hurt, but the church is not something to have your life revolve around. Still others would say that Jesus is a myth or a Legend. A human invention to improve ourselves or control an ancient people.

Who do people say Jesus is? Many have a living faith in Jesus, but our modern culture allows for Jesus to be one of many options. We find ourselves bound by many different idols and gods that demand our time and energy.

Into this reality, our reality, Jesus asks the questions directly, to you this day.

"Who do you say I am?" – Matthew 16:15

Who is Jesus? Is he one of many options for you? Or is He your rock, your foundation, your identity in the constant pressures and distractions of our modern life.

The irony is that even Peter, could not answer this question with out the help of the Holy Spirit to unbind his allegiance to other idols. When Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah Jesus response is key.

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

– Matthew 16:17-18

Who is Jesus? – He is the only solid rock in a storm of demanding calendars and schedules, sports and school, friends and family... all that demands our attention and perfection.

And what does this Rock have to offer? His identity. Peter you will be my presence in the lives of others. Just as you have been set free in this moment to trust in me and me alone. I will use you to do the same for others.

Because my people are bound, Peter, I will create a church to set them free!

Which brings us back to the beginning of our summer discipleship series. This is who you are. You have been doing this work, because of Jesus, your whole life.

Do you remember where we began in Matthew? The calling of the disciples.

Make no mistake, Jesus has called you. You have a ministry. You are the church. When you serve in this place and where one or two are gathered in Jesus' name... God is present there doing his saving and freeing work. Forgiving false allegiances and idols. And unbinding us from our false identities. You are not the product of your mistakes, nor your pride. You are a child of God fearfully and wonderfully made.

We are set free when we find our identity once again In Christ and the work of His Kingdom in the world.

You are the church... in every conversation. The idle chit chat in the narthex after worship or at the kids sporting events. Because Christ is in you seeking to set the person across from you free.

You are the church... unbinding people from their false identities of sin and pride. Most directly when you gather in this place and are a part of worship. In the pew or the reader, an usher, communion assistant, safety officer or nursery attendant. Behind the scenes setting up the communion, serving a meal, or clicking through the worship slides.

You are the church... when you invest in the faith of our children and the children of our community. Teaching Sunday school or as a parent supporting our teachers. Faith guides and Wednesday nights. Mission trips and student events.

You are the church... when you invite others to sit with you in the pew or serve in a life group.

You are the church... when you find yourself asking, ‘what can I do to make God’s voice heard in worship, in the life of my family and in my community.’ You are the church in the same way Peter was. Not because there is anything uniquely special about you, but because God has promised to use your gifts to build His church. Upon the rock of His identity that church has existed in this place for 125 years and throughout space and time for 2000 years. And as God has promised ... His church will be the place where the captive is set free until the end of time.

Because we are bound. Each of us, by our busy schedules and competing identities.

When Jesus forgives your sins... in this place. It is not because your sin has hurt Him. Jesus forgives sin because sin hurts us. Every time we seek to define ourselves, we are bound by that sin, that identity, that idol.

What is sin? It is whenever our lives and identity become tangled in things of this world. The security or prosperity or success of ourselves or our families.

This whole Jesus thing is wrapped up in the forgiveness of sin, because He sees our sin and refuse to let us be bound in it.

Who do you say Jesus is? Is He the lever which you must pull to finally become the perfect parent, or friend? NO.

Who do you say Jesus is? Is He the demanding master seeking your performance in the world, that one right path that will set all things, right? NO.

Is he the one who has come into the world to set your free from your striving? YES. Whatever it is that binds you. The secret ambition of your pride or the shame of your regrets. That is not who you are. You are a child of God set free to enjoy His provision and His timing... in all things.

And make no mistake, above all the specific callings that are your ministry there is one general calling that defines who you are. You are the one who sets your neighbor free. When you are in a conversation with your family or friends you see the idols that bind them, you can name the distractions of their life, and in doing so ... each moment is an opportunity to set your child, your spouse, your coworker and friends free from the rat race of human perfection. The empty promises of the other gods that bind us.

I remember on faithful day in high school... I was running from the computer lab to the end of my English class. I had to get there before the next period rang to turn in my paper that I

had skipped the entire class to finish writing. Only, I didn't get it done. I approached the teacher's desk as the rest of the students were leaving. Pleading for an extension for the paper that was due... in that class... the class I had just skipped.

I was a Junior or Senior, determined to prove myself, establish my own identity... I was running the rat race of a part-time job, varsity sports and trying to stay at the top of the class. And if I am honest the desire to be popular, and fit, and the vast array of peer pressures.

The teacher took the time to set me free. In 2 minutes with a couple of questions, she was able to help me see how thin I was spreading myself across a slew of competing identities. She refused the extension and I bore the consequences of my sin. But at the same time, she was able to help me see that those mistakes did not define me. She gave me a clear picture of what bound me and in doing so set me free.

The grade in that class at the end of that semester had very little effect on the trajectory of my life. Nor did my accomplishments on the wrestling map or the money I needed to put gas in my car. What my fellow student thought of me how well I climbed the social ladder.

What did have an everlasting impact on the trajectory of my life was that 2-minute conversation. A resetting of my priorities and my identity. Something I could not do for myself, something that had to come through the care of another human being.

This is your ministry. This is what the church on earth has done since the begging of time.

¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will

give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” – Matthew 16:18-19

“Who do you say I am?” – Matthew 16:15

Who is Jesus? He is your rock, your foundation, your identity in the constant pressures and distractions of our modern life. You are a child of God set free to enjoy His provision and His timing... in all things.

³ I will proclaim the name of the Lord.

Oh, praise the greatness of our God!

⁴ He is the Rock, - Deuteronomy 32:3-4

