

Luke 9:18-20; Rom. 10:5-13; A Good Confession I. The Truth of this Confession II. The Benefit of this Confession III. The Need for this Confession

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this morning we are going to consider the identity of Jesus Christ. Now as many of you have been raised in a Christian context- this might not sound interesting. You already know who Jesus is. But consider that these disciples making this confession- were acknowledging something that would put their life in danger- a truth that was rejected and despised- as it is today. So far in Luke's gospel, the person and work of Jesus has been kept central. His account has the focus of revealing the identity of this man- so in some ways this text is one of the central points Luke is making. The public ministry of Jesus Christ was just over 3 years long- and can be divided into three sections. The first period was one of obscurity- He was not well known. The second period was one of great popularity- as the crowds followed Him and pressed upon Him. The third and final period is one of persecution and rejection. Our text in Luke 9 forms the transition from the 2nd- His period of popularity- to the 3rd- His rejection and opposition. From here on, His teaching tends to focus on the cross and His suffering. With that in mind, Jesus asks a question about His identity. Who do men- and who do you say that I am? Understanding the person and work of Jesus- His coming to suffer in order to become our savior- is a crucial point that we must embrace. So today we see that Jesus Christ reveals His identity to His people for their salvation.

I. The Truth of this Confession

We start with the truth of this confession. Our passage opens with Jesus praying by Himself- which He often did at important moments in His ministry- and the disciples are with Him. Jesus continues to reveal who He is by way of a question. Children- do you know why your teachers ask you so many questions? It is because answering a question forces you to clarify your own thoughts. By answering this question- the disciples will have to organize their ideas- to make it clear- who is this man? You will remember that Jesus has just fed the thousands with His miraculous bread- and the crowds followed Him because they wanted more bread to eat. The crowds were looking for a miracle worker- and this is what the disciples say. Who do the crowds say that Jesus is? Well- some

see Him as a prophet. One who speaks with authority- bringing messages from God. One of the prophets of old- one of many who have gone before. Now it was true that Jesus was a prophet- but He will be the last of the prophets- the final revelation- in these last days God speaks to us by way of His Son as Heb. 1 says- this one is Heir of all things. Greater than all others- the voice of God- the Word incarnate. Not a but Thee perfect prophet. Others saw Him as John the Baptist who had recently been killed. John had been be-headed by Herod- as earlier in our chapter we read in v. 7-8- some thought John had been raised. You remember that the ministry of Jesus and John overlapped for a relatively short period of time. Some may have confused the two men having never met John before his death. But Jesus is greater than John- since John was the forerunner. John said clearly- I am not the One- I am not the promised deliverer- Behold- He- Jesus- is the Lamb of God! So Jesus was not John or some other prophet. Jesus was not a miracle worker for hire- nor was he a great teacher of morality. Although these are all aspects of His ministry- they miss a crucial fact- as we will see in a moment. They don't say enough- or have a high enough conception of Him! This misconception of Jesus- false understanding about Him- remains with us today. The Muslims still call Him a great prophet. Jews say He was a kind but deceived man. Philosophers and Psychologist say He was a good teacher who gives us help for our problems. Even the "Quest for the Historical Jesus"- is a pursuit today to find the real Jesus- without the miracles and divinity. These are answers to the question- who is this man- but they come to the wrong conclusion.

The crucial fact missing in these is that He is from God- of God. Very God of very God- begotten not made as we confess. Being of God means that He was sent from the Father- with the Father's authority and power. And He is the Son of Man- as Jesus states in v. 22. He is the child of the promise. He is Messiah- the Christ as Peter rightly confesses in v. 20. The anointed one of God- filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned by the Father to bring light, life and truth. Sent also to suffer- as our chapter will continue to reveal. The suffering servant of Is. 53. Jesus is not the kind of Christ that the Jews wanted- Christ came to suffer, to be crucified and die for our salvation. This was not the kind of leader they were expecting. Now coming to this truth was not a credit to Peter. Peter was not smarter than the rest of the Jews- this was a divine truth revealed to Him. The parallel passage in Mt. 16

says that truth is discovered not by flesh and blood- this is not a human invention or discovery. NO- it is revealed to man by the Father. God the Father sends His Spirit to work in our hearts- so that we might know and understand who this man is! If we know it- if we can see who Jesus is- praise God for the gift of His Spirit who has revealed this truth to us!

II. The Benefit of this Confession

Any teaching that does not acknowledge Jesus to be God's Son- uniquely sent and qualified to be our savior- who came to suffer and die in our place- is not a Christian doctrine. So what is the benefit of this doctrine- why is it so important? Well- beyond that fact that this is true- we also find that salvation is linked to the truth of this confession. He is the Christ- the only one who was sent from God for our Salvation. As we read in Rom. 10, if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth- that Jesus is Lord- that He is the Christ of God- then you will be saved! True, saving faith confesses something about Jesus. Salvation is linked to knowing and confessing the truth about Him. So you see- this question and its answer is not an academic quandary- no it is a vital piece of information! And we can even add to this fact- because our parallel passage in Mt. 16 reveals that the church is built on this truth. Jesus says to Peter after He makes this confession- your name is Rock- and on this Rock- the rock of the apostolic confession- Christ will build His church. Jesus uses the truth of this confession- the reality of His work- to build the kingdom of God in this world! Today- the way in which Jesus adds members to His body is by revealing- teaching them that He is the Christ of God! By stirring their hearts so that they too might place their faith in Him alone! There is a missionary focus in this confession. Jesus gathers His people in this truth. And particularly today- as we see in the installation of new office bearers- this is the truth that these men must confess and defend. Who is this man? This truth is central to their work. The keys of the kingdom find their power in that they reveal the truth about Jesus Christ! Pure preaching must reveal the truth about this man! The leaders of this church must hold fast- and pass on this apostolic truth. As I Tim. 3 says- deacons must hold fast to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. And elders in Titus 1- these must hold firm to the trustworthy word as it has been taught- giving instruction in sound doctrine. Office bearers must hold to and defend this doctrine as true- Jesus is

the Christ the Son of the Living God. So the first use of this profession is to spread the good news of who is this man. The missionary application- those who believe in Him and confess His name will be saved. Who do you all- plural- as a church- who do you now say He is? Jesus is the Christ- the Son of the Living God!

III. The Need for this Confession

But there is another aspect to this profession- one that takes its light in the context of persecution. Jesus was going to cross- and those who follow after Jesus will take up their cross and follow Him. In the presence of suffering- because some will deny this truth- we must defend it! I Tim. 4 says that some will depart from the faith. Or as I John 4 says- the spirit of the anti-Christ will deny that Jesus is from God and that He has come in the flesh. This false prophecy in this world will focus on the identity of Jesus Christ- attacking the truth about who He is. This is the second way in which these ordained men are called to use this truth within the church- is to defend her from false teaching and heresy! The spirit of the anti-Christ denies this central claim that Peter made- so the church must be ready to defend its truth and also suffer for professing it! False teachers- wolves in sheep's clothing- want to bring division and unrest. Taking the pure word and diluting or polluting it. It is for this reason that church officers must be on guard- watching out and paying close attention to the doctrine. If a proper belief and profession in Christ is salvation- what does that mean for those of a false believe and deny the only true Savior? Spiritual problems result in damnation if they take root in a person's life.

To conclude- there is hope- as Mt. 16 says- the gates of hell will not prevail against His church. Along with salvation- there is the promise of final victory for those who profess and believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God. Jesus Christ will build His church- and He does so by teaching the truth about who He is! Jesus Christ reveals His identity to His people for their salvation. Knowing and believing in the one, true Jesus means that you will be saved. This is good news! If you believe this and confess this- salvation is yours! Those who acknowledge Jesus before men- Jesus will acknowledge before His Father as Mt. 10 says. Who do you say that I am? Jesus is the Christ- the Son of the Living God! Know Him- profess His name- believe in Him- and you will be saved!