

Second Sunday after Pentecost, June 23, 2019, Year C

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 9:18-23

***"The True Foundation is Jesus"***

If I asked you to describe yourself – what would you say? And I ask you to give me three words to describe yourself. It may be you live in Germany, maybe Camp 151 – that would your description because it is right in your memory, maybe you are a farmer, or a fisherman, who knows. We all have identities. Some of us wear them proudly, and some of us keep them tucked away. Somehow I can't hide this identity (pointing to my collar). You'd be surprised how many places I go in town or in Coffee County, and I might just be wearing a polo shirt, and somebody would say "I saw you" – as a matter of fact yesterday, when we got back into town from South Florida, we went into a certain store and someone said "Hi Father, how are you?" I was just wearing a T-shirt, jeans and a pair of sneakers. Sometimes we can't escape who we are.

Jesus wanted to find out what people thought about Him. Our course He knew, but He wanted to find out how the Apostles registered what they were hearing. And then came the big question; Jesus asks the disciples to share with Him what is being said. What others were saying and profession to believe about Him was all over the map – they were saying "*Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.*" This is not all that far off from what some people are saying today: how many of you have heard people say - "Jesus is a great teacher," "oh, Jesus was a prophet, a preacher and a healer," or here is the kicker – I get so upset when I hear this: "Jesus is just one of many ways to heaven, (leaving out the Father) but not the only way." That irks me – I can't help it! Jesus' words were clear: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me.*" John 14:6. He didn't say My Parent: 'our Parent who art in heaven' – no, He said, "Our Father, Who art in heaven." Either you believe every word that is in that book called the Holy Bible, or you don't! Either you believe every word that Jesus said or you are calling Him – one of the things that C. S. Lewis said, 'Jesus is either a lair, a lunatic, or Lord.' I am not going to ask you what your thinking is, but for you to come out on a Sunday morning at 10:30 when you could be at the beach – I really think that your answer is Lord. And I think you know what my answer is! When it came time for the apostles, where the rubber meets the road – Jesus asked them specifically: "*Who do YOU say that I am?*" I ask you that question now. Just think about what you think Jesus is – and it could be one of several things.

Peter responded, as he was kind of impetuous – he was the first out of the boat and other things, but he answered, "*You are the Christ of God.*" Christ is not Jesus' last name - Christ is from the Greek word *Christos*, which means Messiah, or anointed one. Saying "Jesus is a great teacher," or "Jesus was a prophet, a preacher and a healer," or "Jesus is just one of many ways to heaven, but not the only way" or that anyone else is "the Way, the Truth and the Life," poisons that foundation – weakening it to the point of collapse and rubble. How many people here like iced tea? If you have your iced tea sitting for a long time with the ice in it, and the ice melts, you have a diluted iced tea. The kick is gone. You cannot dilute things. I

must confess, it is unnerving and unsettling when those statements come from within the Christian community itself, it dilutes, and waters down the faith – it is deceitful and false! It is straight from the father of lies! When you hear stuff like that – that is not God who is talking.

There comes a time when you have just had enough of these falsehoods, tired of hearing the all of the lies, a time when the truth must be told – and the faith professed – no matter what! It is time to proclaim the true identity of the church. We as the Body of Christ, and it doesn't matter what flavor you come from, whether it is First Baptist or Methodist, or Presbyterian, whatever the flavor is – if you believe in Jesus, that is what counts. That is proclaiming the true identity of the church. We as the Body of Christ can continue to ignore the poisons that are flowing through, or we can stand up, trusting in Almighty God for His provision, for His protection, for His blessing, and for His strength in the days to come – like Abraham, relying on our faith in Him that somehow we will make it through; somehow we will continue to proclaim the ONE TRUE GOSPEL of Jesus Christ. I was reading about a book that is out there 'Conversations with God' that has been out for a while. It is such a bunch of drivel. Oprah Winfrey loves it. That tells me right away it ain't the truth! It is so full of things that are identifying with the culture. Those are not God's words. I told you where that stuff comes from. We want to proclaim the TRUTH about Jesus Christ, undaunted, undeterred, and undiluted. As the Apostle Paul encourages the church in Ephesians 6:13, (all of Ephesians is written to the Church and it is very encouraging) this message is for us as well; let us "*take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*" Let us be confident that Jesus "*is the Christ, (the anointed one, the Messiah) the Son of the Living God*" (Matthew 16:16) and let us, together, boldly, with blessed assurance, profess the faith that endures!

### **So who do you say Jesus is?**

- Is Jesus the Son of God?
  - Is Jesus the one who requires repentance for sin – and then provided forgiveness?
  - Is Jesus the one who sacrificed Himself – on the hard wood of the cross – so that "whoever believes in Him – shall not perish – but have eternal life?"
  - Is Jesus someone who touched hearts and cured bodies and souls of people who have faith in Him, and continues to do so today?
  - Is Jesus someone who came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets?
  - Is Jesus someone who invites people to come to Him and be transformed – never to be the same again – healed of affliction, disease, addictions, perversions and sinful behavior?
- Isn't it remarkable that there are people *who like to "call themselves" Christians* today who cannot – or will not attest to the fact of Jesus' true identity; that He is who God the Father says He is? At His baptism – God spoke. On the Mount of Transfiguration He said, "*this is my beloved Son, listen to Him!*" There are others in the church today who have trouble believing things like the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection.

One thing is clear – you either accept the Divinity of Jesus Christ as the only Son of God – who died on the cross for the atonement of our sins – OR NOT! Believe in Him – and what the Bible says about Him - OR NOT! If you do believe in Him, then you are a follower of Christ or a Christian; otherwise I don't know what you are following and I think you are following a different god! The truth is: you either believe what the Bible says – or you don't. Those 66 books are rich and they are full of Jesus. If you don't believe what the Bible says -- then call yourself something other than a Christian – and start living whatever truth you do believe in. The Apostle John warns us of this kind of deception with these words from 2 John 1:7-9, *“Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*

The problems we are facing today, and there are a lot of them in the church, are based on who Jesus is and the authority of God's Word. If you believe that Jesus is who He says He is, and that God's Holy Word is true – then other issues fall into submission to Jesus Christ and to Holy Scripture. That is the issue we face – and that also is the solution. Let Jesus and God's Holy Word transform us to His ways – not transform Jesus and Scripture to ours. My dear friends, there is only ONE TRUTH - God has spoken – JESUS IS HIS SON – and we are to listen to Him! Immediately following today's Holy Gospel, which took place at Caesarea Philippi, they proceeded to a mountain nearby, believed to be Mount Hermon, where Jesus revealed his True Identity to Peter, James, and John in the Transfiguration. It was here that Jesus was transfigured into His heavenly beauty, in white that was glowing incredibly, standing in between Moses and Elijah, who were also in their glory. Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah). He stood there and God the Father spoke – saying, *“This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!”* God the Father made Jesus' true identity apparent to the world, so why do we still have doubters? The answer is there are some who think the Bible is just a bunch of great, nice stories that were written for children – with stories like David and Goliath. You are here today, thank God, because you know otherwise. You know the truth.

A strong faith is the necessary foundation if we hope to survive this world. Some major questions arise among many people today – belief in what; belief in whom? We as followers of Jesus Christ – like Abraham, believe in God the Father; we also believe that God sent His Son, Yeshua, Jesus, into the world – so that *“whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16) In addition, we believe that God sent His Holy Spirit, who as Jesus told us in His words from John 14:26, *“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”* If we acknowledge and believe that much, then we also should also accept and profess Jesus as our Lord and Savior – seeking a deeper relationship with Him, through prayer and through spending time reading and listening to His Holy Word. And yet, we still

are fighting a battle with those who do not believe and question the truth – especially the Bible as truth.

Please listen to these words of Jesus that He spoke in Matthew 7:24-27. These I often read at a baptism. *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”* If the foundation is faulty – so is its future. If our faith – our belief in Jesus and the Words that He spoke to us, is solid – as if built on the rock – then our future is undeniable. But if we waffle or waver, unsure of what we believe or if we even believe at all, then we are like the foolish person who built on sand – and our future is like dust in the wind. An even worse scenario is the person who begins with this solid foundation – but “sells out” to the world – “sells out” to the popular thinking of the masses: you know -- “you believe what you want and I’ll believe what I want.” “We’ll all be OK, because we are good people!” In my honest opinion – that kind of thinking is the poison that destroys. Faith is supposed to transform culture, but with a weak foundation the opposite happens – culture transforms the faith. When the foundation weakens – it’s easy for him to seep into the sand that remains.

There is only ONE true foundation – ONE Solid Rock on which to stand – all others are but sinking sand! That solid rock is Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, Yeshua ha Mashiach, Jesus the Messiah, He is our ROCK, our FORTRESS.

Today, as we worship and celebrate the Holy Eucharist, let us thank God for His One and only Son and His sacrifice, for the gift of His Word, and let us make sure that we are who we say we are. The Holy Spirit can help us to be who we say we are, to show the world Jesus in our hearts– reflecting the image of God through our love and belief in Jesus Christ.