

13th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**ST. PETERS ANGLICAN CHURCH BUNDOORA****Sunday 23rd August 2026****Fr. Stephen Monsiegnur****Readings:**¹ Exodus 1:8-2:10 / Psalm 124 / Romans 12:1-8 / Matthew 16:13-20**Series Title:** Called to Discipleship, Who Me? How?**Today's Theme:** *"Who do you say Jesus is?"***Exodus 1:8-2:10*****The Israelites Are Oppressed***

⁸ Now a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. ⁹ He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. ¹³ The Egyptians subjected the Israelites to hard servitude ¹⁴ and made their lives bitter with hard servitude in mortar and bricks and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶ "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." ¹⁷ But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. ¹⁸ So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this and allowed the boys to live?" ¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." ²⁰ So God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very strong. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²² Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

Birth and Youth of Moses

² Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ² The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. ³ When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. ⁵ The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" ⁸ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰ When the child grew up, she brought him to

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Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Psalm 124

Thanksgiving for Israel's Deliverance

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

¹ If it had not been the Lord who was on our side
—let Israel now say—

² if it had not been the Lord who was on our side,
when our enemies attacked us,

³ then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;

⁴ then the flood would have swept us away;
the torrent would have gone over us;

⁵ then over us would have gone
the raging waters.

⁶ Blessed be the Lord,
who has not given us
as prey to their teeth.

⁷ We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the hunters;
the snare is broken,
and we have escaped.

⁸ Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. ² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸ the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Matthew 16:13-20

Peter's Declaration about Jesus

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

SERMON

Throughout Matthew's Gospel, we have been journeying with the disciples as they learn, often imperfectly, who Jesus truly is. We have seen Jesus proclaimed as Emmanuel, "God with us"; revealed in his teaching on the mountain; demonstrated through miracles of healing, provision, and authority over creation; and recognised in moments of both faith and misunderstanding by those closest to him.

Again and again, Matthew presents a central question: How will people respond to Jesus? Some marvel, others doubt, religious leaders oppose him, and even the disciples struggle to comprehend who stands before them. Now, as we arrive at Caesarea Philippi, that question becomes deeply personal. Jesus turns to his disciples and asks, "But who do you say that I am?"²

This is not merely a question of doctrine. It is a question of discipleship. It invites every generation, without exception, to consider not only who Jesus is, but how that confession shapes the way we live. Today's scriptures are not just stories of an ancient time; they are relevant throughout our world even today, demanding that we open ourselves to explore what it truly means to answer that question faithfully.

Beginning in Exodus. A new Pharaoh, a world leader, who knows nothing of Joseph, whom we considered last week, and cares little for Israel's history, rises to power. Fear becomes the foundation of his rule, and oppression becomes his solution. The Hebrews, and possibly anyone he sees as a threat, are enslaved, their identity threatened, and their future placed in jeopardy. Yet even in the darkness, God thankfully is at work. Through the courage of midwives, the faith of a mother, the watchfulness of a sister, and the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses is preserved³. However, what is remarkable is that God's work is revealed through ordinary acts of faithfulness. There are no dramatic miracles recorded in this moment. Instead, God works through people willing to choose courage over fear, compassion over indifference, and faith over despair.

² Matthew 16:15

³ Exodus 1:8-2:10

As disciples today, we often long for clear signs, even proof agreeable to our bias of God's activity. Yet Exodus reminds us that God is frequently present in the ordinary and the unseen. Before Moses became a leader, liberator, and prophet, he was a vulnerable child sustained by the faithfulness of others, some might say even somewhat misguided by the ideals of his world. Discipleship, we realise, begins with recognising that God's providence is at work, even when we cannot yet see the full picture.

The psalmist reflects upon precisely this truth. Looking back on the story of God's people, Psalm 124 begins with a declaration of gratitude: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side"⁴. Israel's survival was not the result of military strength, political influence, or human ingenuity. It was the result of God's faithfulness.

This confession challenges any culture, such as that of Pharaoh's Egypt, that values self-reliance and independence. *Something that is very present in our world today*. The psalmist understands that every generation stands where it does because God has sustained closing the confession by declaring, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth"⁵.

In many ways, this is already an answer to Jesus' question. Who do you say that I am? We can reply, you are the God who has been with us. You are the One who delivers, protects, sustains, and remains faithful when our own strength is not enough. But what is the implication of such a position for us as disciples?

Paul takes this understanding and asks what response it demands from believers. After describing God's saving work through Christ, he urges the church: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"⁶.

For Paul, discipleship is never merely intellectual. It is not simply agreeing with certain truths about Jesus. It is instead allowing those truths to transform every aspect of life. To confess Christ is to offer ourselves in service to Christ.

Paul continues by calling believers not to be conformed to the patterns of the world but to "be transformed by the renewing of your minds"⁷. We see that discipleship involves a continual reflection and reshaping of our values, priorities, and actions according to the purposes of God.

Importantly, Paul reminds us that no disciple journeys alone. God gives different gifts to different people. Some are called to teach, some to encourage, some to lead, some to serve. Faithfulness is not found in comparing ourselves to others but in using the gifts God has entrusted to us individually and communally for the building up of the body of Christ⁸.

⁴ Psalm 124:1

⁵ Ps. 124:8

⁶ Romans 12:1

⁷ Rom. 12:2

⁸ Rom. 12:3-8

This brings us back to Caesarea Philippi.

After all the teaching, miracles, journeys, and conversations, Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"⁹.

Peter answers, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God"¹⁰.

This is the turning point in Matthew's Gospel. Peter's confession is more than a statement of belief. It is a declaration of allegiance. It recognises that in Jesus, God's saving purposes are being fulfilled. The God who preserved Moses, delivered Israel, and sustained his people throughout history is now uniquely revealed in Jesus Christ.

Yet Matthew makes clear that such a confession is not reached through human wisdom alone. Jesus responds, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven"¹¹. Faith itself is a gift of grace.

And so the question remains before us.

Who do you say Jesus is?

If he is merely a teacher, then we may admire him from a distance. If he is merely a historical figure, then we may study him with interest. But if he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, then everything changes.

Then we trust him in times of uncertainty, as the Hebrews learned to trust God's providence. We give thanks for his sustaining grace, as the psalmist did. We offer our lives as living sacrifices, as Paul urges. And we commit ourselves to the work of his kingdom, using our gifts in faithful service.

From Moses to the psalmist, from Paul to Peter, Scripture leads us to this defining moment. The question Jesus asked at Caesarea Philippi is still the question that confronts every disciple today. Our answer is spoken with our lips, but it is ultimately revealed through our lives. For the true disciple not only declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, but lives each day as though that confession is true. _____ Who is the Jesus your life reveals?

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, thank You for the truths we identify in our lives through the wisdom of scripture and examples of the prophets and saints. Help us to carry these lessons into our daily lives with faith, courage, and love. Strengthen our hearts to follow Your will, trust Your guidance, and shine Your light in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

⁹ Matthew 16:15

¹⁰ Matt. 16:16

¹¹ Matt. 16:17