

"A Question About Our Resources"

July 12, 2026

Pastor Tim Boettger

We're looking at these questions that Jesus asked, and of course we can take them as questions that he might ask us in any given situation, and we can decide how we would answer them or how seriously to take these questions, each of us individually. We've looked at open-ended questions that Jesus has asked, provoking deeper thinking of those he was teaching and leading. Of course, this is the greatest leader of all time asking these questions. He asked far more questions than he answered. He used questions as a way to direct people's lives physically and spiritually.

He asked rhetorical questions to emphasize a point and get something across. He asked many direct and specific personal questions of those who were around him. And today we're looking at another one of those. The context is this: Jesus has recently called these 12 disciples to be His students. He's a rabbi.

They are following Him and He's starting to train them. They're new in their training. This is their rookie year. And He has sent them out two by two to do some ministry after He has modeled doing ministry for them. Ministry is involving yourself with the pain and the issues in other people's lives.

So Jesus has done this Himself and now He is sending out His disciples to be involved with other people's lives, two by two. During this time, the great John the Baptist, the one whom Jesus said, "Of men born of women, there is none greater," he prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah given by God. John the Baptist has been brutally beheaded because of Herod's lovely wife and daughter. They asked for his head delivered on a platter. So there is tension and drama brewing in the area.

The disciples are out ministering. They're seeing God work, but there's also a sense of trepidation of what's happening around. The apostles gathered around Jesus, the text said, and reported to him all they had done, all they had seen. They were seeing people healed. They were seeing people's hearts softened and come to repentance before God.— they were seeing demonic beings dealt with, evil being resisted.

They gathered around Jesus and reported all that they had experienced. But because so many people were coming and going, they did not even have a chance to eat. So Jesus said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' Ministry is emotionally and physically taxing.— and Jesus knew this, so he said, "It's time to rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. As a good shepherd of our souls and our lives, God cares not only about our doing but our resting. I love this about God.

He cares about the whole of us as people. Yes, He wants us to experience the adventure of doing and seeing an impact in the world. But He also wants us rejuvenated and refreshed as we

pour out our lives in service. That's what a good shepherd does. He encourages growth and stretching, but also gives time for resting.

But—the text says. Many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there to this solitary place ahead of them. The crowd beat them there. They went by boat. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So he began teaching them many things. This is what Jesus did. He ushered in grace and what's true, what's real. And because he had a heart for all these people, he wanted them to know what's true and what's real. And so even though they all needed rest, he re-upped for ministry and started pouring himself out again.

God not only cares about his disciples and the pace of their lives, but he cares about the multitudes of lost people in this world. As a matter of fact, the Bible says God is being patient with the world right now, not wanting any to be separated from him for all eternity, but all to come to a knowledge of him. That's why the world is still here, because of God's patience and love, wanting more and more people to come to Him. He cares about the multitudes of lost people in the world that don't know Him. Now in the middle of this, as they're all being stretched in a long day, it became late in the day, so the disciples came to Him and said the obvious.

"Come on, this is a remote place. It's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." As normal human beings, the disciples here are quite practical. They're pragmatic. They're commonsensical.

They let, like many of us do, the normal needs of daily life drive a lot of their decisions. They're sort of ruled by the plans and thinking that come from when do we eat next, what kind of rest do we need, what's an appropriate pace for life, and all of these things. That's how we often think. We're just driven by pragmatism, common sense. Now, I love this text.

Those of you that have walked with God for some time will know this. God sometimes interrupts our pragmatic, common-sensical plans with ideas of his own, inviting us to be stretched, It was late in the day. They came to Him with their basic plan: "Send the people away. There's no food out here. There's restaurants, people cooking in the villages and other places.

They can go there and buy something to eat." But He answered them, "You give them something to eat." You give them something to eat.

Sometimes God has far bigger plans for us than we've ever thought of or dreamed of. He often invites us to think bigger, to trust Him more, to depend on Him more than we ever dreamed.

He's stretching His new young disciples to expand their thinking about the Creator.

"You give them something to eat." In this time wine was often put in wineskins. They would ferment new wine and they would create new wineskins out of animal —leathers that were made— sew them together. And if you put new wine in new wineskins, it worked. The new wineskins would stretch with the new wine as it expanded, as it aged. But if you tried to put new wine after you used up some old wine out of an old wineskin, tried to put new wine in the old wineskin, the new wine would stretch the old wineskin, break the wineskin, and you'd lose the wine.

And the wineskin.

Jesus talked about this when He talked about God creating new packages in the world for new wine to be poured out. What Jesus is doing here with His disciples, He's saying, "Stretch your thinking a little bit. God wants to do more through you than you ever thought. Expand your mindset. Don't get it crusty and kind of old and stiff with an old mindset." Think in a new way.

Expand your thinking. We're not going to send these people away to buy food, as would seem commonsensical.

I want you to feed them. Well, it's hard to think differently. It really is hard. They couldn't quite comprehend this call. So they said to Him, "That would take more than a half year's wages of our money." Now the disciples were a ministry and people would give to their ministry, so they had a certain amount of money in the coffers.

And certainly they all sort of shared in the resources together. And they were saying, "This is going to be half of our year's sustenance." Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat? They just don't get it.

That's all they can see.

And so Jesus asks them a question.

Here's the question: 'How much bread do you have?'

How many loaves do you have?' Let's just take a little inventory, see what we got. Not of money, but of bread, a different resource.

Now in the Bible, bread is understood to be a real nourishing source of food. I think a correct interpretation of this is about barley bread, which is a heavy source of nutrition. But bread is also used as a metaphor by God for the dispensing of all of life. Keep that in mind.

He's asking them, "What do you have that you can offer to nourish these people? How many loaves do you have?" Take an inventory. Go and see. Take an assessment.

They found out and they said, "Five loaves and two fish." Now 12 guys could probably deal with five loaves. I don't know how big they were. And two fish. It's not an enormous amount of resources, but basically they're saying, Jesus, we got 5 loaves and 2 fish, and you can have them. Just take what we got.

5 loaves, 2 fish.

Now he's asked them to feed them. He's trying to expand their vision, their thinking. They've come to him with more willing hearts now.

Here's what we have.

I don't know about you, if you've ever experienced this, but I love it in life when Jesus takes over. I love it.

When we offer him what we have and say, "Lord, do what you will."— with what we have. It's yours! And then we lay it in His hands and He starts to take over and move with what we've offered to Him. Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. They sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

I wish I could have been there. Hundreds and fifties of groups of people all over the place. 5 loaves and 2 fish. Taking the 5 loaves and the 2 fish, looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke the loaves. What does that symbolize?

The pouring out for others. Then He gave them to His disciples to distribute to the people. The calling of the church to be involved in the distribution of life. He gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up 12 baskets of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of just men who had eaten was 5,000.

It's very hard to predict.— or even give an estimate to what God might be able to do with what we offer Him. He is the Great Multiplier, the Creator of all things, the Orchestrator of life. Everything He touches grows and expands with life. That's who God is.

Well, everybody was filled and ministered to and enjoyed this, and so the crowds followed Him the next day.

And He said to them on the next day, "Truly, truly I say to you, you're seeking Me not because you saw the miracle and the sign, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." We got a good social program started here. Free food for everyone! You're following me now because you don't have to work for this food and I'm going to feed you. But that was not His intent. Something more is going on here from the great leader.

He says to them, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures eternal life." He simply met their needs —so that He could invite them to a place where He could meet a much greater need in their lives. "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal." Then they said to Him, "What must we do to be doing this kind of work?" The work of God.

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God," quite simply, "that you believe in Him whom He has sent." Believe in Him. Trust in Him. Have confidence in Him.

Well, they said to Him, "What sign do You do that we may see and believe in You?" Not that He just fed them the night before.

"What sign do You have that we may believe You? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus, the masterful leader, invites these people beyond human lusts, beyond human needs, beyond the biological, into the supernatural, into the spiritual. Jesus said to them, truly, truly I say to you, it was not Moses who gave them the bread from heaven, but my Father who gave you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' 'Sir,' they said to Him, 'give us this bread.' Jesus said to them, 'That bread is Me.

I am the Bread of Life. I'm the one who's going to be broken so that you can live forever.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

There's a lot of good things to give to the world, friends.

It's good to give money to feed people who don't have food, to give shelter to people, to help educate people.

But friends, the most important thing going on no matter how long a person lives or suffers here on the earth is whether or not they come to the bread of life.

Eternity is at stake.

And we can meet people's physical needs for 30, 40, 50, 60 years, and they can still go to hell for all eternity without Jesus.

I am so thankful to be a part of a church that gives money and resources to support the sharing of the good news of the bread of life.

We meet a lot of other needs, but The Church of Jesus Christ is uniquely positioned in all institutions in the world to hold out the word of life in Christ.

Thank you to all of you who have been so faithful through all of these past years, working for this, praying for this, striving for this. May God continue to, as we give to this end, expand the number of people in the multitudes that we can offer the bread of life to. Praise God for his goodness and his kindness.

"A Question About Our Desire for Freedom, Growth, and Responsibility"

June 28, 2026

Pastor Tim Boettger

What is our tradition here when we open God's word and read from the gospels? Out of reverence for it, if people are able, we invite you to stand as we revere the living word of God that he gave to us in mercy and grace. And he inspired by his spirit, uh, the four gospels to be written down so that we would understand when God appeared in the flesh, we could learn more about him. And today we're looking at another question that Jesus asked. It's found for us in John's accounting of Jesus' life, chapter 5, verses 1 through 9.

Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals, a celebration. Now there was in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda, and which is surrounded by 5 covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie. The blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." Then Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your mat, and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The good news of our Lord. You may be seated.

As we continue looking at questions Jesus asked, we're only sort of dabbling into these questions. In 15 weeks of summer, we barely touched the surface of all the questions that we have record of Jesus asking. We see that He Himself was asked on record over 100 questions, but He only responded directly to less than 10 of them. 10 of them. But He Himself asked over 300 questions on record.

I'm sure there were more. We've looked at different kinds of questions that He's asked. We looked at open-ended questions where he is provoking us to think and discuss something to stimulate our minds. One of those examples is, "Who do people say that I am?" People were talking about Jesus, and he wanted his disciples to discuss things that were being said about his identity. We also looked at the rhetorical questions that are asked by Jesus, a couple of them.

These are questions that are not looking for an answer, but they're actually questions used to make a point. I talked about when my mother asked me if I wanted to go to the Nutcracker ballet, and I could just simply say to her, "No," or I could say to her, "Do pigs fly?" and ask a

rhetorical question that basically says, "No, they don't." Now, that was when I was 8. I might enjoy The Nutcracker a little more at this age, but I certainly would have enjoyed more going to a sporting event back then. Rhetorical questions: Is not life more than food? And the body more than clothes?

He's not looking for an answer. He's trying to get us to think deeper about life. About the true nature, the spiritual nature of life. He also asked direct, specific, personal questions to call out the listener. Not, "Who do people say that I am?" but, "Who do you say that He is?" Today we're looking at another direct, specific, personal question that Jesus asked.

But I would also suggest that this is a disruptive personal question. It's disruptive to us. The context is this: Jesus was traveling around with his disciples, and they decided to go back to Jerusalem for a celebration in the community, a Jewish festival. I think Jesus liked going to these because he could interact with a lot of people at once. So they went back to this festival, and He really never did anything randomly.

He was intentional in what He was doing. God is very intentional and directed in His life, in His will. The text says, "There is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda, and which is surrounded by 5 covered colonnades." Here a great number of disabled people used to lie, the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed. I have a map of Jerusalem here if you want to go to the next slide there. The Pool of Bethesda was just north of the temple.

You have the Mount of Olives on the right there. That was often the way people entered the city there by the temple. But on this day, Jesus decided to go north of the temple to the Pool of Bethesda where many people who needed healing would hang out. And I have a picture of what this area might have looked like. It was more like two pools with these covered colonnades around it.

And this is sort of the best guess from the archaeological digs of how those pools looked north. And they're quite big, 200 yards long or so, couple football fields between them. So many people could gather in this area. So they've come to this place, and there's a great number of disabled people lying there, and they are lame, blind, all kinds of illnesses. Now, in the text, in some translations, all you'll see is number 4 and no reference to any verse.

But some translations have an added verse for number 4 that says this: "They waited for the moving of the waters." From time to time, an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had. That helps us understand the context of what's being said here and what's happening here. There was this idea, and maybe it had happened. Maybe the Spirit of the Lord, an angel of the Lord, had stirred these waters and someone found healing.

You know, healing could come in many different ways. And I don't understand God's plan in healing. Sometimes He heals people instantly. Other times He heals people through a process

using physicians and other insights and wisdom. And sometimes He just— He left many people unhealed.

I don't claim to understand, as we look into a passage about healing, all what's in the mind of God about healing. But there are some things we can all learn from every part of Scripture and every passage. And so God can work however He wants, in whatever way He wants. But here we have a specific way that He worked in this time. Many of these people who needed a touch, a healing, gathered around the pool there.

And one who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. That's a long time, 38 years. It doesn't say he was born with this. Matter of fact, likely he wasn't. Something happened in his life, and he may be older than 38.

He may be 40. It might have happened when he was just young. 50, 60, 70, 80 years old. We don't know. But for 38 years, he'd been an invalid.

Now an invalid, it's a very unique word. The original Greek text uses the word *asthēnon*. *Asthinon*. It translates directly to someone who is sick, frail, or lacking strength. It's based on an Old English term that means this person was chronically ill, weak, or disabled in some way.

38 years. The next part of the text, inspired by the Spirit of God, says this:— when Jesus saw him lying there. I don't know why he saw him over all the others who were lying there, but God is not random. He saw him lying there and learned— and this is the second mention of time— learned that he had been in this condition for a long time. The Spirit of God is emphasizing this time.

Why?

I don't know. I asked the Lord this week, "Why the 38 years? Why a long time?" He could have just said there was a man laying there who was an invalid.

I wonder if God is emphasizing something that He knows about human beings, and that is that time gets us used to things.

It gets us acclimated to things. We have another unique word in English that we don't very often use. It's a word called habituation.

It's the process of becoming accustomed to or used to something. It starts to feel like an old glove for us. It just feels normal to us. Habituation comes from two separate words: habits that are formed around a given situation. All of us form habits around certain circumstances and situations in our lives that over time start to feel normal to us.

They start to feel like this is how our life is, this is how it should go. This is, this is me, this is my life. Habituation causes a diminishing of physiological or emotional response to frequently repeated stimulus. My grandfather got habituated to his pain.

When I was younger, he developed cancer of the tailbone. And he lived in our house, and the pain was so bad he couldn't sit on chairs. It hurt him to stand up, and so he would sit on cushions as much as he could. Then he would crawl from one room to the other and crawl up on the couch and try to keep that pain at bay as best he could. But before he was debilitated by his pain, I remember asking him, I said, "Does that pain bother you a lot?"?

And I'll never forget his answer. He said, "You know, over time you just kind of get used to it. It just becomes your way." Habituation.

Jesus sees this man who was an invalid for 38 years. For a long time he'd been there. —when Jesus saw him lying there—learn this—he asked him now a very loving question.

This is the heart of God. He does nothing that's not loving.

But this question is a disruptive question. It's a question for self-awareness. But he's getting ready to disrupt this man's life.

The question is this: after 38 years, do you want to get well?

Do you want to? I mean, really.

God knows all things. He sees all things.

Jesus knows getting older is automatic. That's just going to happen.

But growing and stretching ourselves throughout the course of life, that's not.

Human beings, He knows, often choose the path of least resistance. We settle in. We get discouraged. We give up. We get used to the way things are.

We sort of accept them. We get desensitized to things that used to bother us more.

Maybe this man was so habituated into his circumstances, Jesus knew he'd sort of given up his want to.

Jesus is, in a sense, asking him, "Now, when you think about this, do you want your whole life to change at this point? Your whole life?" to change? Are you ready for the duties of being well, the responsibilities? Are you ready to own the demands that will come upon you as a capable person?

On an even deeper level, are you ready to give up an old identity and take on a new one?

To surrender your identity and take a new one?

Are you ready for a whole new chapter in life?

Are you ready to step out of the crowd that's become your crowd?

Are you ready to stand out in a different way, have people talk about you in a different way, take on new risks, learn new things?

Jesus also knows this. He said it in Luke chapter 12. He said, "If I'm going to give you a healing touch, then we— God the Father and God the Son— they're going to expect more of you, because to whom much is given, much will be expected." From whom one has been entrusted a healing of the body, much will be asked.

And so he asks him, do you really want it?

Are you open to it?

Have you looked at the cost of healing?

Inside, I don't know, but I, I I've tried to get a sense of this man's want-to meter, and I think it's just where it is in this image here. I think it's right in the middle.

I think he's intrigued by being physically free, but he's scared of it.

He hasn't had it for a long time.

And I think we can see that his want-to meter is right there in the middle by his answer. He says, "Sir." He doesn't know who Jesus is. He says, "Sir, I have no one to help me in the pool for 38 years." I have no one to help me in the pool. When the water is stirred and I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.

Now I don't know what you'd call this, but I would call this a smokescreen.

He's been asked a very direct, personal question and he just puffs out a little smoke.

Ah, sir, I just, I have no one to help me. Really?

After 38 years you couldn't get a plan with somebody?

Someone else always trying to get in ahead of me. It's when someone just throws out some things to defuse the pressure. That they're under. It's a psychological trick people use to evade some truths being brought to the surface, excuses and smokescreens.

Sometimes, though, God in his goodness and kindness blows away the smoke and makes a choice for us. I've been thankful when he's done that for me many, many times in life. I don't know if you've ever had God overrule your want-to meter, but it starts very early on for all of us. None of us actually chose to be born.

God, before he formed us, he knew us, he knit us together in his mother's womb, and when the time was right, Boom! We plopped out, and here we are, all of us walking on the planet. We didn't get a vote. I don't know. Now I'm pretty happy about that, but there's been some periods in my life I'm like, God, are you sure this was right?

This is a pretty rough world, but I didn't vote in that.

And there are numerous other things that I'm not sure how much I voted in in the course of my life.

And here is this gentleman, he's asked if he wants to get well, and God decides to overrule his want-to.

He asked him if he wanted to, the man gave his smoke scream, and then Jesus said to him, "Get up!

Pick up your mat and walk." Sometimes God steps in and burrs us into a new chapter of life. Whether we wanted him to or not.

Sometimes he uses something seemingly good, like a healing. Other times he allows something very painful or tragic to birth us into a new chapter.

And more often than not, those new chapters require more dependence on God, more faith and trust in Him, more courage, more belief in His goodness, more confidence in His kindness.

For this man, he was going to have to— now he hadn't walked for a long time— learn how to walk, learn how to do other tasks and skills. Take on new responsibilities.

You know what the church is supposed to be, friends?

It's supposed to be a place where you and I are encouraging each other as God calls us out to take new risks, operate new levels of freedom, opulate new levels of responsibility, using our gifts as the people of God together serving him— a place where we build each other up, encourage each other, fan the flame of each other. Not try to pick each other apart or criticize certain little changes that are made, but give fuel to each other. Infuse each other with the Spirit

and power of God. Bear each other's burdens. Take on loads for one another and give life to each other.

I wish there were more men leading young men into the life of God in our world, friends, calling them up and out into who God created them to be. Our world is longing for this. Families are longing for this. God is longing for this, for people to be willing to let go of worldly identities and step into the identities that God is calling them into with courage and faith and hope and perseverance, with an "I will not quit" attitude. I will not give up until the Lord calls me home.

Caleb was 84, 85, 86 years old, and he went into the Promised Land.. And Joshua said, "What land do you want?" He said, "Give me the hill country where the giants are. God made me strong when I was younger. He'll make me strong when I'm older." We need more people who will be responding to God's call and us encouraging each other to build each other up, be shaped by the Spirit of God, learn to walk in Him.— be refined by him, listening to one another, sharpening each other to be the salt and light of the world. I don't think this story is so much about a physical healing as it is about a person's willingness to keep growing and changing and maturing and stepping out and taking risks until the end.

That's what I think this story's about.

All through life, I want to just say thank you to so many of you who've been so faithful, persevering, and being courageous and holding to God's Word.

But friends, it's, it's time we keep going. I believe there's new chapters, new possibilities, great new opportunities on the horizon. And God is saying to us, Nazareth, let's get up.

Let's keep walking. In faith.

Let's follow him wherever he leads and be open to whatever he's saying.

At once the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked. I bet it was a little clunky.

I bet it took him a while to catch his rhythm.

But later Jesus visited him for something more important.

Says he found him at the temple, as Jesus often does. He never gives up on us. Went back to him and said, "Hey, you're well again. 38 years, you're well again." Then he said this, "Do it right spiritually now.

Do it right before God now." Stop sinning. I don't know if you ever get the fear of God in your heart when you study a text, but I do. Jesus said to him this: Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.

Oftentimes When Jesus was teaching, he would end saying, "Those who have ears, let them hear." I want to spend a little time in prayer, and then we're going to go into a prayer song that Eric is going to sing for us before we do then a proclamation of our faith. And I just changed things up here a little bit to let the Spirit have a little bit of a new wineskin to pour some new wine into our hearts so that we might sense that he's on the move and that he's working in our midst. Let's pray together.

Father, I thank you for your work in the world. Of all the things going on in the planet, an anniversary of a country, a celebration in our community, there is nothing more important going on than your Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men and women, drawing us to you.

Forgive us when we stray from these most important things and give our hearts and minds to more trivial things, things of the world, things that are passing away.

And Father, I'm mindful that there are probably some sitting here today that you've been calling them to to leave something behind, to loosen their grip on something.

And maybe they've been right in the middle with a want-to.

I ask that your Spirit would minister to them now to help move the meter in their hearts towards you.

Give them the want-to to want to follow you. To trust you, to release what they're holding on to and open up their hands to you and say, God, whatever you want, whatever you're asking me to let go of, I release it to you and I trust you.

Give us a willing heart, Father, to be open to your new work. And your new ways in our midst. Help us, as your word says, forget the former things and look ahead, because you're doing a new thing, making a new way in the wilderness, new streams for people to draw water from, new life for those coming behind us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

"Questions to Calm Our Worried Souls Part 2"

June 21, 2026

Matt Reisetter

Awesome. Men of faith leading the church in worship. That's a good thing. So my name is Matt Reisetter, and I was born and raised in this congregation. I did a stint on staff in college and young adult ministry.

I've served in different capacities. And right now, my wife Jen and I are— have the privilege of facilitating some group conversations that are designed to help us come up with a discipleship plan for the entire church that's going to be strategic. It's going to be integrated. Jesus' command in Matthew is that we would go into all nations and make disciples. And so we want to

make sure that at Nazareth Church, we've got a plan in place that allows everybody to become a more and more effective disciple of Christ, challenges them to do that.

And then we go out in the world and, uh, follow, obey, uh, Jesus' command. Um, you're going to be hearing more about that later this fall, and we're excited to roll it out for you. It's still kind of in process, so you can be in prayer about that. Uh, in addition to that, I want to mention a couple other things before we jump into this message and the gospel reading. Uh, number one, a couple different hats that I wear.

I'm the director of the Cedar Falls Bible Conference. It's a 105-year-old Bible conference, one of the oldest in America, and it'll be taking place here in Cedar Falls at Riverview Conference Center. There are people in town who don't know where that's at, which blows my mind, but they do know where Four Queens is at. And so it's 3 blocks north of Four Queens, uh, and we're going to be going from, uh, July 25th through August 1st. A bunch of great Bible preachers and a guy who's going to give a great testimony, Scott Hamilton, the Olympic figure skater.

Um, so come join us. We're going to have brochures in the mail. There's going to be posters hung up in the church here in this next week. And, uh, come see us at the Cedar Falls Bible Conference and just have your soul fed by God's Word. Bunch of free, uh, children's ministry opportunities.

The whole thing is free, no registration required. CedarFallsBibleConference.com for more information. I also am the director of a ministry that's been here at Nazareth, uh, officed at Nazareth for decades called Christian Crusaders. And Tim Boettger, the senior pastor here at Nazareth, is also the radio preacher for Christian Crusaders. And we actually publish the messages that he preaches from this podium right here onto our radio broadcast.

We do some podcasts. We do a Daily Dose devotional podcast. We do some long-form interview podcasts. And so if you've never really explored Christian Crusaders and all the content that is there to bless your soul, go do that. ChristianCrusaders.org.

There's a sign out in the hallway there. You can learn more about it. And, uh, That's all I'm gonna say about plugging other things. Now we're gonna get to the word of God, which is what you came here for today. And actually, I'm gonna have you, I know we've been standing up and sitting down, but out of reverence for God's word, we have people stand for the reading of God's word.

So if you can stand, let's stand. We're gonna be in Matthew chapter 7, verses 7 through 11. Matthew 7, verses 7 through 11. And here's today's gospel reading. Ask and it will be given to you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent.

If then you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? Go ahead and have a seat, and I'm gonna say a prayer. Heavenly Father, as we open your word, I pray that you would inspire it by your spirit so that each one of us would be changed by it. Uh, even as I stand here and speak, continue to let your word sink into my heart and help align my life with what it is teaching. And I pray the same for all the hearers, whether they're here in the sanctuary at this time or online or watching it sometime later.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

I was driving to my office last week. We live down by Hudson, and my office is here in the church. And a gal who is a friend of ours who was in Iowa City doing this extensive cancer treatment came to my mind. And so I started to pray for her. Now, I don't want you to have this picture in my mind that I'm just this super pious guy.

I'm always praying. A lot of times I'm listening to the radio when I'm driving, or I'm thinking about something else. The state of Iowa is making it much more difficult for me to be on my phone. Uh, but this time This time, uh, I was praying for our friend and we've seen many text messages come through updating us on her status. It's going relatively well, but one of the concerns was that she had an elevated body temperature.

She's having these fevers. And so I'm, I'm praying very specifically that the Lord would bring her fevers down. That's just what the text message asked to pray for. And I came to the stop sign. Stoplight at Highway 58 and Green Hill Road.

And as I'm stopping at that red light, it was like God stopped my prayer with a thought that came into my mind. And this is the thought that came into my mind: Hey Matt, how do you know that that fever, those elevated temperatures, aren't actually accomplishing a good thing? You don't know the details. You just know that she has elevated temperatures and you're praying for these temperatures to go down. But how do you know that the higher temperatures aren't actually accomplishing something good?

After all, in our bodies, higher temperatures help fight off, uh, viruses and bacterial infection. How do you know that the exact thing that you're praying for, for your friend is opposite of what she actually needs. Now here's the deal, I'm not a doctor, I don't know exactly how an inflated temperature works in her situation, but that whole scenario made me wonder about how do we know exactly what God, what we should be asking God for. And it made me think about how God responds to the things that we ask for. You might remember Paul.

Paul was an apostle of Christ. Paul wrote much of the New Testament. He had what he described as a thorn in the flesh. There's a lot of debate about what that actually was. We don't really know.

Was it, was it a physical ailment? Was it a spiritual weakness? Was it a literal thing or was it a metaphor? We're not sure. Uh, but we do know that Paul asked God 3 times to remove this thorn in his flesh, whatever it was.

And God didn't do it. In fact, God refused his request, and God said, Paul, my grace is sufficient for you, and my power is made perfect in your weakness. I wonder if anyone today would say that they have a thorn in their flesh, physical ailment, spiritual weakness, a relational brokenness that they've been asking God to remove and he hasn't removed it yet.

Well, Paul eventually believed that God did not remove his thorn in the flesh. He didn't give him what Paul was asking God for as a way to keep Paul from becoming conceited and as a way to keep Paul relying on God. And again, that makes me wonder, like my prayer at the stoplight, it makes me wonder how to know exactly what I should be asking God for. And it makes me think about how and why God responds to our asking the way that he does. And I don't have all the answers to those questions, but here's what I do know. God is good.

God is infinitely and perfectly good. He knows everything. He knows the beginning from the end. From, uh, the subatomic to galaxies and universes, from the hairs on our head to the thoughts and the inclinations of our hearts and minds. And he gives his children good gifts always.

That's what I do know. Sometimes he doesn't answer our questions or our requests the way we'd like him to. Sometimes his answers are no or wait, they're not always yes. Sometimes that is the source of great hardship or suffering or pain. And so what are we supposed to think about that?

And that's a really important question that Christians have to struggle and grapple with.

Speaking of questions, we're in a series right now that's exploring questions that Jesus asked. And as it just so happens there are a few questions that Jesus asked in today's text that help us better come to terms with these questions we're asking on these topics. Before we go into the text again, I want to just tell you the whole point of this sermon right now. I've learned a long time ago from my own experience, people tune out during sermons. And so I'm going to tell you what I'm going to say, then I'm going to say it, and maybe you'll catch it one of those couple times.

Here's what I'm gonna say. God is not a vending machine. He's not waiting to give us whatever we ask for. But he's a perfect and good heavenly Father who will always only give his children the, the best gifts. And this should inspire us to increasingly trust him, build our lives around him, and serve him always.

Now let's look at the text, verses 7 and 8. Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

And you read that and you go, wait a minute, wait a minute, I thought you just said that God is is not a vending machine. But that sounds like a lot of— a lot like a vending machine to me, does it not? Does it not?

If we take verses 7 and 8 out of context, we can cause a lot of misunderstanding about who God is and how he operates and what the Bible teaches. We might even go start a TV ministry and become multimillionaires telling people that all they need to do is ask and seek and knock and they can get whatever they want. It's called the prosperity gospel, and it's heresy. It means it's false. It's not true.

It doesn't line up with Scripture. And the prosperity gospel, friends, is everywhere. I recently heard from a friend of mine who's Liberian. Alfred actually sat across the table from me at a wedding last night. He's planting churches in Africa, and he says the number one impediment to the expanse of the gospel in Liberia is the prosperity gospel.

You've got Liberians who think they're Christians, except they haven't bought into the true version of Christianity. They think they're fine spiritually, so when Alfred and his ministry comes along with the true gospel, what do they need that for? They already know God, the vending machine God.

Here's a key concept that we've got to embrace when it comes to understanding the Bible. Anytime you're trying to figure out what a text in Scripture means, always use other portions of Scripture to interpret it. That kind of hedges us in from going off the rails and coming up with wacky stuff like the prosperity gospel.

Are verses 7 and 8 making the case for God being like a vending machine? No, of course not. You might think so if you just pulled them out just like that. How do we know? Well, we know because there are hordes of other passages, including the next 3 verses, that are going to teach us the correct interpretation, which is contrary to the prosperity gospel.

You with me so far? I got a couple stories coming, so just— it's going to be fine, okay?

I get accused for my preaching being a little too heady, but you guys are smart. I have confidence you can hit— you can hang with me. Let's look further. Jesus continues in verse 9. Here's what he says.

He's kind of fleshing this out now. Or which of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks him for fish, will give him a serpent? If then you who are evil know how to give good gifts— next slide— to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? Who ask him?

These are 3 questions that Jesus asked. Remember, we're in a series, Questions Jesus Asked. There they are. 3 rhetorical questions. Tim Butker laid out for us last week what a rhetorical question is.

You should go listen to that sermon if you haven't. It's phenomenal. If we slow down and if we mull over what Jesus is saying, this is super, super interesting. But you gotta put your thinking caps on and you gotta focus in for just a little bit more. And I'm gonna let you up for air, hang on.

Jesus said, let's go back to verse 9, "Or which of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?" Think about what Jesus did not say for a second. What did Jesus not say? Jesus didn't say, "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, won't give him bread."

Do you see that?

Jesus's question— listen to this— Jesus's question doesn't automatically assume that earthly fathers are gonna just give their children whatever they ask for. What Jesus's question assumes is that earthly fathers aren't gonna give their children a terrible thing in response to the good thing that they asked for. There's a difference. You see it? There's a difference.

Let's do it again in verse 10. Let's do it again in verse 10. Jesus asked, or if his son asks for a fish, will give him a serpent. You see what he didn't say? Jesus didn't say, or if his son asks for a fish, won't give him a fish.

Jesus's question doesn't automatically assume that the earthly father is gonna give his son the fish that he asked for. All it assumes is that the earthly father isn't going to give him something terrible like a serpent in response to his son's good request? Not if you understand what I'm saying. Ah, good.

The reason this is important is because in framing the questions that way— hear this— the reason this is important is because in framing the questions that way, Jesus is introducing the notion that mere earthly fathers who give, give good gifts to their children are not obligated or even expected to give their children whatever they ask for in order for it to be considered good. And if that's true of earthly fathers, then it's certainly true for the heavenly Father. Here's a few earthly examples.

Dad, can I have that pair of \$150 baseball cleats?

No, son, actually you're gonna wear your brother's baseball cleats that he used when he was your age.

Ha! The dad's not saying no, you can't have baseball cleats at all, and the dad is not saying no, No, and you're not going out for baseball either. And the dad is certainly not saying, no, and by the way, you're gonna be locked in your bedroom all summer. That would be terrible. He's simply saying that knowing what he knows and based on his understanding of what's best for his son, maybe best for the family budget which affects his son, you're not gonna get what you're asking for this time.

But you are going to get something that's good, and you can play baseball just fine in your brother's cleats. In fact, the dad might say, Mariano Rivera, who grew up in Panama and became the greatest closer of all time for the New York Yankees, he would have loved to have your brother's cleats when he was your age.

Dads, come on, can I get an amen? Amen. Here's another example. Hey, Dad, can I go hang out with my friends on the river this afternoon? No, son, actually you're gonna be mowing the lawn this afternoon.

And so Dad's not saying you can never hang out with your friends. He's not saying you can never go to the river again. And he's certainly not saying, "No, and speaking of the river, I was planning on taking you down there to drown you this afternoon," which would be terrible. That's not what he's saying. He's just saying that he's got something different, something better for you in mind right now, even though you might not think it's better at the moment.

Maybe this young guy's gonna learn a work ethic and it's gonna benefit him when he's 50 years old 'cause he knows how to work when his other coworkers don't and he gets a raise, or I don't know how it's gonna bless him. But Dad knows better in some of these cases. I got one more, I got one more. Hey Dad, can I date this boy right over here?

Uh, no.

But you can date this boy right here.

Anyone got daughters? Yeah, okay. I'm for arranged marriages, but that's a different sermon.

By the way, by the way, we need to emphatically acknowledge, we need to emphatically acknowledge that earthly fathers and our heavenly Father oftentimes do give us the very thing we're asking for. It's not always no, no, no. And it's oftentimes our heavenly Father and our earthly fathers say yes.

I got home one night at 11 or 11:30 PM, it's a couple years ago, and my son Mason is the only one who's still awake in the house, and he meets me at the door and he says, "Dad, you see the Yankees score this after— tonight?" I said, "No." He said, "They got rained out, actually." Well, Mason and I are Yankees fans, and we've traveled around the country going to games, and I'm like, "Oh yeah, you know, rained out, big deal." He said, "Actually, it was in September, so it was too late in the season for them to reschedule a makeup game." He said, "Actually, tomorrow at Yankee Stadium—" We're in Cedar Falls, Iowa. "Tomorrow at Yankee Stadium, there's a very rare single admission doubleheader because they got to get this game in and they don't have time to redo it and tickets and all this stuff." And then he goes, "I think we need to go." That's a pretty bold ask, but it resonated with me.

Long story short, we found super cheap flights from O'Hare to LaGuardia for about 10 AM the next morning. This is like 10 hours away. I told Mason, go get a few hours of sleep. I'm going

back to the office because I need to do some things before we go, and then You can drive to Chicago and I'll sleep on the way. Not wanting to wake up Jen and the girls, we left a note on the counter that they read the next morning, and it said, if you've checked our location, you might wonder why we're in Chicago.

We're going to see the Yankees. See you tomorrow. We go out there, \$25 tickets. For the second deck front row right above the Yankee dugout, which is my favorite place to sit in any stadium. The ballpark was so empty for Game 1 that the shortstop and the second baseman in consecutive innings threw balls up to us.

It was one of the greatest trips I've ever taken, one of the greatest memories we've ever had, and one of the cheapest, honestly. Uh, sometimes earthly fathers say yes, even to the most audacious requests. And that's even more true of our Heavenly Father. We get what we ask for a lot, way, way more than we deserve.

So Jesus wraps up this text in verse 11, says, if then, if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him. Jesus is saying, y'all fathers know how to give your kids good things, even if it's not always what they ask for, despite the fact that y'all are messed up. And so how do you think I, the perfect, all-knowing, all-good, all-powerful, spoke creation into existence with a word? How do you think I'm not going to give good things to my children when they ask?

We can trust God to give his children good gifts, always. Before I move off this, I gotta point out two things in verse 11. Number one, this is important. Jesus said, "If you then, who are evil—" Interesting that he kind of conditioned the "you" that way. "If you then, who are evil—" There are some dark and misguided corners in Christianity where there's this false notion that Jesus is this always soft, always gentle, only wants to build people's self-esteems and make them feel good, beta male type guy.

Study the Gospels. That's not the Jesus of the Bible. Don't get me wrong, Jesus is the most compassionate, the most empathetic person who ever walked on the earth. He can do tender and gentle better than anyone ever. But, but the Jesus of the Bible sometimes brings the thunder.

And sometimes instead of just responding to the fight that is brought to him, sometimes the Jesus of the Gospels starts the fight. Just read the Bible, it's in there, I promise. And sometimes, like right here, he purposely uses provocative language to drive home an important point.

See this? He could have said, if then, if you then who are merely human, but that's not what he said. He said, if then you who are evil. He could have said something more diplomatic like, if you then who aren't perfect, but he didn't say that. He said, if you then who are evil.

Are evil. And I don't know, I'm just a simple-minded guy. I get the sense that Jesus wants us to be reminded of something that's really important. Dads and grandpas and uncles and brothers

and moms and grandmas and aunts and sisters. I think Jesus wants us to get the idea that we're evil in our natural human condition.

We're not just not perfect. The entire UNI sociology department would agree with that. It's not what Jesus is saying. He's saying we are evil, and this is not the only place in Scripture that teaches this. It's all over the place, actually.

Furthermore, Scripture clearly teaches that if we don't get our evil, natural condition fixed, taken care of, we're on a highway to hell. And there is no chance that we're going to get— that we're going to live an abundant life in this life.

And that brings me to the second thing I want to say about verse 11. Later on, he says, uh, second line, into the second line, how much more will your Father— how much more will your Father Friend, and I mean that, by the way, I view you as friends. I don't like to say harsh things just for the shock value of it, but I want you to understand truth.

And so friends, here's the question I have for you. Does this text even apply to you?

Does this text even apply to you?

Is God your Father?

I mentioned this in the children's sermon. This is a newsflash. A lot of people get this wrong, including people who call themselves Christians.

Not everyone is a child of God, and thus God doesn't treat every person as one of his children. We're all created by God, we're all created in the image of God, yes, but it's only those who receive Jesus Christ, who believe in his name, who God gives the right to become children of God. That's John 1:12, and there are a bunch of other verses that basically say the same thing. So the question is, have you received Jesus Christ? Do you believe in his name?

If not, you can do it right now while you're sitting there in the quiet of your heart. You say something like this, God, I agree with you that I am evil. I know I'm evil in my natural condition, and I acknowledge that Jesus was perfect. I believe in him. I want to receive the forgiveness and the perfection that he offers through his perfect life, his sacrificial death and resurrection, so that I could be made holy instead of evil and therefore pleasing to you.

And you can end it like this: And I want the Heavenly Father, who always only gives good gifts to his children, to be my Father. I assume in a room this size with this many people in it that not everyone has done that, and I would urge you strongly to do that.

The whole trajectory of your life will change. You won't believe it.

As I wrap up, uh, for those of you who have received Jesus and are therefore children of God, there are a couple things that the Holy Spirit— and the Holy Spirit comes in us when we put our faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit is alive and at work inside all believers. There are a couple things that the Holy Spirit is accomplishing inside us to a greater and greater degree with reference to this text. We can't take credit for them. It's God doing the work through the Holy Spirit.

It's by his grace. It's through faith in Christ. The first thing is this: the longer that we walk in this understanding of who God is, the more we're able to see the things that God gives us, even those things which were not originally part of our plan or our desire, as good gifts.

I know Christians out there, I know you've experienced this. There was a time in my life when I had a lot of political ambition. I lost two campaigns by narrow margins, 2006, 2012. I didn't enjoy that at the time, but I look back at that and I'm thankful for those losses, more thankful than I can articulate. Those good gifts from God gave me time with my family.

They spared me from becoming a bought and paid for political hack that I'm afraid I might have become back then. They've opened me up to vocational and ministry opportunities that I never would have had if I'd won. So today, if you offered me— and I'm not kidding— if you offered me a \$10 million check to wind the clock back and get the result that I desperately wanted then, I wouldn't even think about it for a second.

The good gifts God gave me back then, the losses that I didn't want at the time, have never looked so good. And now you can insert your own story there, because you've seen this. If you're a son or a daughter of God, you've seen this at work in your life over and over and over. And praise God for the good gifts that he gives us that we didn't want at the time.

Second thing I wanna mention as we wrap up is that the longer we walk in this understanding of who God is, the more we ask and seek and knock in ways that are kingdom-oriented, the more we are drawn to serve God's agenda And the less we are to ask and seek and knock in ways that are self-oriented, and we're less drawn to serve our own agenda. That's a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit given to us by faith in Christ. It's not something we do, it's something that automatically happens in the hearts and minds of true believers who are children of the heavenly Father.

In all this, We will receive when we ask. We will find when we seek, and it will be open to us when we knock, whether it is the thing that we're originally asking for or something else that's better according to our good and perfect. Heavenly Father. Amen.

Please pray with me. Lord, this is a tough concept. We like to get what we want when we want it, but we don't even have a perspective that is oriented even close to your perspective, and so we don't even know what's best for us most of the time. So we ask for things that we don't need, and we want things that we shouldn't want. And I just, on behalf of sons and daughters of God who've experienced this over and over, I am so thankful that you're bigger and wiser and smarter, and you always only give us good gifts regardless of what we're asking for.

I pray that these truths would sink deep into our bones and affect the way we live day in and day out. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

“Questions to Calm Our Worried Souls”

June 14, 2026

Pastor Tim Boettger

Well, it truly is a joy to have you here in worship with us this morning. I want to give a special welcome to those that are worshiping online as well. If you're a guest and visitor here, we're really glad to have you. We do hope that the Lord is ministering to you and does continue to minister to you in the time we spend together. I also want to give my thanks and gratitude to the generosity of this church and how the giving, even down through its history, has been so good.

And we're thankful for that. And, you know, ministries and churches, they move at the speed of generosity and how God prompts generosity in the hearts of people and more fuel in finances and resources allow us to do more things. And so we're thankful for that. And we want to do as much as God empowers us to do here as a church family, reaching out to encourage this world that lives in darkness with the great light that we carry and that we bear in and of ourselves. I also want to mention that Mike talked about some men volunteering for vbs.

We would love to have any gentleman, whether you have children or not, join us for VBS and volunteer some time and energy to help lead our children in the ancient paths, the paths with God. And that's a really fun week when that unfolds here at vbs. One more men's morning is coming up as well. We've had three, three Wednesday mornings, and this will be the last one here. Breakfast is served at 6:15 Wednesday morning and then we look to wrap up by 7:30.

The speaker in there has gone a little long winded at times, and so we've gotten out there about 7:35 or so. He's going to keep working on that. I also want to mention that we are working behind the scenes pretty steadily and consistently on a discipleship strategy for our church. A strategy to help people who want to more intentionally grow in their Christian faith, grow closer to God, be more empowered by him. We hope to unveil some good encouragement on that in the fall.

I want to dive right into our message this morning. But before we read our message, before we get into our message, we read a gospel reading. And out of reverence for the living word of God, I invite you if you're able to stand. As we read of Mark's accounting of something that happened, we're talking about questions that Jesus asked. Something that happened on a road where Jesus was interacting with his disciples.

It's recorded in three of the Gospels, Matthew, Luke and Mark. Mark writes about it in verses 27 through 33 of chapter 8 of his book, Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea and Philippi. On the way, he asked his disciples, who do people say that I am? And they told

him, John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others one of the prophets. And he asked them, but who do you say that I am?

Peter answered him, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

And but turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, get behind me, Satan, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man, the good news or the word of our Lord. You may be seated. We are looking at a few of these questions that Jesus asked. Questions that he asked people just like you and me when he was walking here on the earth. We have record in the scriptures of Jesus himself being asked 187 questions recorded for us in the Gospels.

Approximately he answered directly, less than 10 of them. He didn't answer questions directly very often, but he himself asked well over 300 questions of people just like you and just like me. His leadership style was one to draw people out by asking them questions. He asked them questions about life, about finances, about spirituality, about their beliefs, about many other things. King Solomon penned these words many, many thousands of years ago.

Several thousands of years ago, probably around three. He said this. Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 5. The purposes and ways of a person's heart are like deep waters. What's going on inside of us is very deep.

It's very complex. But a man of wisdom and understanding can draw those ways out, can bring them out into the open and into the light. Jesus was a great man of understanding and wisdom, no one greater. And he often used questions to draw out what was inside of people. Last week we looked at a probing question that Jesus asked, a self assessment question.

The question was asked to two individuals, two young men who were followers of John the Baptist. But John was decreasing and he was asking Jesus or inviting Jesus to increase. And with his followers, he kept pointing them to Jesus. And one day after Jesus was baptized, Jesus came around again. And John looked at him and said, look, the Lamb of God saying this is the sacrificial one.

He's the one who's come to lay down his life for people, for all people. He is the Lamb. And these two individuals left John. They changed their profession and started following after Jesus. They were students of John and now they were going to become students of the rabbi Jesus and, and Jesus turned and looked at them and asked them this question.

In your change there, in what you're doing, in the action that you're taking, what are you looking for?

He was drawing them out.

They didn't answer him directly.

I will share with you in a moment why I think this was an open ended question. He was inviting them to talk to him. He was inviting dialogue. Dia is through log is Logos through words. Logos is word through words.

Let's talk about this rational conversation. What are you looking for? Let's talk. God is very personal. This question assumes something of the hearer.

It assumed they didn't have something that they wanted. You're looking for something in changing your profession, what is it you're looking for?

It's an often asked question in many different settings. We looked at a number of settings where this question could be asked last week and this question specifically had this context. The question today that we are looking at is a question Jesus asked on people's beliefs regarding his identity. The context is Jesus was well into his earthly ministry. He had become quite famous at this point.

His disciples and many others had seen him perform many miracles. If you just look at Mark's gospel accounting of Jesus life up until chapter eight, you'll see record of numerous miracles that he performed before this time he had spoken to many large crowds. People were coming out to hear what this man was saying, what Jesus was teaching. Word about him was spreading. He had shared many parables with them, spiritual stories, stories to illustrate spiritual realities.

He is actually starting to cause quite a stir in and around the many communities in the area there, around Israel. And he's developing quite a large following. They didn't have as much peaceful time alone Jesus and his disciples as they used to as the crowds thickened and grew. And so it says in a quieter moment of travel, when they're traveling from one place to another on the road out in nature, well, it's likely quite quiet. He asked his disciples a very unique and interesting question.

He went on with his disciples, the text said, to the villages of Caesarea, Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, who do people say that I am, that I am.

It's another open ended question. He's inviting more conversation.

It acknowledges or Assumes that something is happening. Jesus is assuming or acknowledging. There's a lot of chatter about him going on. There are many opinions flying around about him. People are talking and he wants to know what they're saying.

As he's gotten more and more famous, it's obvious to the disciples something is going on. Chatter is rising, and Jesus is saying, hey, let's talk about it. But he's asking more specifically, let's talk about what they're saying about who I am. It's not an often asked question. I've never asked it before.

I did just sort of ask it to the children, but I've never outright asked this question, who are people saying I am? Maybe you haven't either. Maybe you've asked a different genre of this question. When you've shown up and people say, hey, we were just talking about you, you might have asked the question, well, what were you saying? What were you saying?

But you probably didn't say, well, who do you think I am?

It's a unique question we could deduct from this question that in Jesus eyes, what people are giving voice to regarding their belief about his identity must be quite important.

He phrases this question very intentionally. Who do people say I am? I am?

Well, they answered him.

There's a lot of opinions. Jesus.

Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others one of the prophets. And on it goes back then, just as there is now. There are many opinions in the world about Jesus. He remains the most talked about and written about man in world history. By far the most talked about and written about man in all of humanity.

Opinions are still rampant, ideas about him are still flying around.

And Jesus knew this back then. And so he asked his disciples, hey, what are people saying about me? And more specifically, who are they saying I am?

Well, then he turned to them again and he asked a more personal, direct question.

After they had dialogued a little bit about what people were saying, he said to them, who do you say? Who do you say I am?

It's almost like Jesus asked a safe, information gathering question on the current gossip about his identity in order to get to the asking of a far more personal and direct question for each of his disciples about their true convictions regarding who they each believed he was.

He asked them, who do you say that I am? Ever been in a classroom where the teacher asks a very personal, direct, specific question that nobody wants to answer? That awkward silence sits there and no one wants to step out and voice an opinion or share a conviction? Have you ever been asked a personal question? Where you were hesitant to answer it.

When we answer a very specific, direct and personal question, we're risking a little. We're risking being wrong. If a teacher is asking, we might be wrong, we might be corrected if we're wrong. We don't necessarily like to be corrected, especially in public, but we don't like to be wrong. Our pride doesn't like that.

We may be risking being laughed at or rejected or ostracized, criticized for our answer. We definitely fight for free speech, but in certain settings, sometimes we don't feel free to share our personal convictions and opinions. Sometimes it takes an enormous amount of courage to step out and in a word, be vulnerable with what we believe, what we're convicted of.

I don't know if you've ever been in a setting where you've been asked directly, specifically, personally, who did you vote for?

Who did you vote for?

What do you believe about abortion?

What do you believe? Do you believe it's right or wrong? Have you ever stolen anything from anyone?

Are you being honest with your expense account?

Are you cheating on your schoolwork or in life in some way?

Or did you kick your sister?

Did you kick your brother?

Specific, direct, personal questions. Jesus has gone from a safe question to a riskier question. Who do you say that I am? And if we bring it to the modern day, who do you say that Jesus is? What's his identity?

Who is he?

Well, Peter stepped forth with, I don't know, great zeal, great courage. I don't know. He was a feisty man if you study him in the Bible. But he stepped forward with an answer. You are the Christ, the son of the living God.

Peter says. All of these opinions floating around about Jesus and Peter steps out with a confident answer. You are the Christ, the son of the living God. Christ comes from the Greek word Christos. It means messiah or anointed one.

You're the long awaited one. You're the Messiah. You're the hope of the world. You're the one anointed by God. It's a bold confession.

And to deepen it, he says, you are the son of the living God.

It's a conviction you're not merely human, but you're divine.

Who do you say that I am?

The Christ. The one we've all been waiting for.

Well, Jesus liked Peter's answer. He liked it. He liked it so much that he did something next that we don't see him do in any other place in Scripture. In Matthew's accounting of this interaction, we see that Jesus blesses Peter. In a way, he blesses no other one recorded for us in the Scriptures. He answered him and said to him, blessed are you, Simon, his given name.

By his parents, Jesus is going to rename him Peter. Blessed are you, Simon. You're human. You came from your parents. He's expressing Peter's humanity.

Blessed are you as a mere man, son of Jonah. To emphasize it more, you're the son of another man. But I bless you for this confession.

And then he says this, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. This didn't come from some opinion of another man or woman, not from flesh and blood. But Almighty God in heaven showed you this about me. It's a spiritual revelation. It's something that has come into your spirit by God's spirit.

So you understood beyond comprehension of the human mind, who I am. Jesus is saying to Peter, blessed are you, Simon, as a mere man, son of Jonah, for God has spoken to you about me, that he blessed him personally, specifically by name.

And so we focus on the question today. Who do you say that he is?

It must be a very important question for Jesus to ask it this way. The most influential man in all of history. What does your life say about what you believe about him?

Could this be the most important question we'll ever answer?

Could the answer to this question of who he is be the answer to last week's question, what are we all looking for? What are we all longing for? What are we all wanting? To help narrow down and simplify people's approach to this question, the great author C.S. Lewis wrote an excerpt in his book Mere Christianity, where he argues that Jesus himself only left three options open to us in answering this question.

In his writing, he says this. He's trying to prevent anyone from saying something really foolish that people often say about Jesus in their answer about who he is. Don't say this. He said, I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say.

C.S. Lewis argues a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic. On the level with the man who says, hey, I'm a poached egg, or else he would be a devil of hell, a great deceiver of many people down through history. This man claimed a lot of things while he was here on the earth.

And if you call him a great moral teacher, you're missing what he said. He was not a great moral teacher. He was that as a part of who he was. But if you add some of the other things he said about himself, you have to claim he's crazy, he's a deceiver, or he was who he said he was. But this idea of Jesus just being a prophet, or just being a teacher, or a mere man who was confused himself, that might be right.

But those other ideas, they show your own ignorance if you answer the question that way. And by the way, many religions in the world answer the question of Jesus identity that way. As a prophet, as a priest, as another rabbi.

We must make our choice. CS Writes, either this man was and is the Son of God, or else he was a madman, crazy man, or a great deceiver, something worse. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher or just a prophet or a priest. He himself has not left that option open to us. He did not intend to.

The Apostle Paul answered the question this he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. By him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, authorities, powers. All things were created by him, and for Him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is our leader in the church, the head of the church.

He is the beginning of the firstborn from among the dead. He is the offer of eternal life. He is the preeminent one. In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell through him, to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth, in heaven. He is the mediator between a fallen humanity and God Himself, through His peace offered by his shed blood on the cross.

John writes this beloved, do not believe every spirit or idea that floats around in the world, but test the spirits to see if they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses Jesus as the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah, those spirits come from God. And every spirit that does not confess Jesus as Lord, as King, as Christ is not from God.

This is the spirit of the Antichrist which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

If all this is true Jesus, question of what do we each believe about his identity must be quite important.

Romans 10:9 says, if if you and I confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved. If we don't, we stand condemned already.

We're going to move into A time of communion.

Communion is a partaking of the gift of Jesus, the sacrificial gift of Jesus. But it's more than that.

Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth saying, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the death of our Savior until he comes again.

We have open communion here at Nazareth. That means if you have acknowledged Jesus as your Savior, as your Lord, confessed him as Christ, when you walk down here, you're proclaiming him as Lord with your actions. But the Word also says we are to proclaim him with our mouths and say he is Lord.

I want to invite you, if you are a believer in Christ, to join us in this celebration.

But if you haven't yet received revelation of who he really is, if you haven't yet come to understand deep in your soul that he's the long awaited one, the Messiah, the hope of the world, the one from whom all things stem, maybe don't come down here and pretend like you do.

But if in the quietness of this moment, you feel his spirit calling you to believe, maybe right now you could confess. You sense the Spirit saying this is true.

Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. I believe.

And then if you acknowledge that, then you come. We all have to answer this question for ourselves. And Jesus is still echoing it down through history. Who do you say that I am? Let's pray together.

Father, I am mindful that the Scriptures tell us that we will each individually stand before your judgment seat.

And the crucial question we will answer on that day is what we came to believe about your son, Jesus and the good news that you shared with us about him.

Give us ears to hear, Father, and eyes to see what is really true of him. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

"A Question of Identity and Belief"

June 7, 2026

Pastor Tim Boettger

Well, it truly is a joy to have you here in worship with us this morning. I want to give a special welcome to those that are worshipping online as well. If you're a guest and visitor here, we're really glad to have you. We do hope that the Lord is ministering to you and does continue to minister to you in the time we spend together. I also want to give my thanks and gratitude to the generosity of this church and how the giving, even down through its history, has been so good.

And we're thankful for that. And, you know, ministries and churches, they move at the speed of generosity and how God prompts generosity in the hearts of people and more fuel in finances and resources allow us to do more things. And so we're thankful for that. And we want to do as much as God empowers us to do here as a church family, reaching out to encourage this world that lives in darkness with the great light that we carry and that we bear in and of ourselves. I also want to mention that Mike talked about some men volunteering for vbs.

We would love to have any gentleman, whether you have children or not, join us for VBS and volunteer some time and energy to help lead our children in the ancient paths, the paths with God. And that's a really fun week when that unfolds here at vbs. One more men's morning is coming up as well. We've had three, three Wednesday mornings, and this will be the last one here. Breakfast is served at 6:15 Wednesday morning and then we look to wrap up by 7:30.

The speaker in there has gone a little long winded at times, and so we've gotten out there about 7:35 or so. He's going to keep working on that. I also want to mention that we are working behind the scenes pretty steadily and consistently on a discipleship strategy for our church. A strategy to help people who want to more intentionally grow in their Christian faith, grow closer to God, be more empowered by him. We hope to unveil some good encouragement on that in the fall.

I want to dive right into our message this morning. But before we read our message, before we get into our message, we read a gospel reading. And out of reverence for the living word of God, I invite you if you're able to stand. As we read of Mark's accounting of something that happened, we're talking about questions that Jesus asked. Something that happened on a road where Jesus was interacting with his disciples.

It's recorded in three of the Gospels, Matthew, Luke and Mark. Mark writes about it in verses 27 through 33 of chapter 8 of his book, Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea and Philippi. On the way, he asked his disciples, who do people say that I am? And they told him, John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others one of the prophets. And he asked them, but who do you say that I am?

Peter answered him, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

And but turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, get behind me, Satan, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man, the good news or the word of our Lord. You may be seated. We are looking at a few of these questions that Jesus asked. Questions that he asked people just like you and me when he was walking here on the earth. We have record in the scriptures of Jesus himself being asked 187 questions recorded for us in the Gospels.

Approximately he answered directly, less than 10 of them. He didn't answer questions directly very often, but he himself asked well over 300 questions of people just like you and just like me. His leadership style was one to draw people out by asking them questions. He asked them questions about life, about finances, about spirituality, about their beliefs, about many other things. King Solomon penned these words many, many thousands of years ago.

Several thousands of years ago, probably around three. He said this. Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 5. The purposes and ways of a person's heart are like deep waters. What's going on inside of us is very deep.

It's very complex. But a man of wisdom and understanding can draw those ways out, can bring them out into the open and into the light. Jesus was a great man of understanding and wisdom, no one greater. And he often used questions to draw out what was inside of people. Last week we looked at a probing question that Jesus asked, a self assessment question.

The question was asked to two individuals, two young men who were followers of John the Baptist. But John was decreasing and he was asking Jesus or inviting Jesus to increase. And with his followers, he kept pointing them to Jesus. And one day after Jesus was baptized, Jesus came around again. And John looked at him and said, look, the Lamb of God saying this is the sacrificial one.

He's the one who's come to lay down his life for people, for all people. He is the Lamb. And these two individuals left John. They changed their profession and started following after Jesus. They were students of John and now they were going to become students of the rabbi Jesus and, and Jesus turned and looked at them and asked them this question.

In your change there, in what you're doing, in the action that you're taking, what are you looking for?

He was drawing them out.

They didn't answer him directly.

I will share with you in a moment why I think this was an open ended question. He was inviting them to talk to him. He was inviting dialogue. Dia is through log is Logos through words. Logos is word through words.

Let's talk about this rational conversation. What are you looking for? Let's talk. God is very personal. This question assumes something of the hearer.

It assumed they didn't have something that they wanted. You're looking for something in changing your profession, what is it you're looking for?

It's an often asked question in many different settings. We looked at a number of settings where this question could be asked last week and this question specifically had this context. The question today that we are looking at is a question Jesus asked on people's beliefs regarding his identity. The context is Jesus was well into his earthly ministry. He had become quite famous at this point.

His disciples and many others had seen him perform many miracles. If you just look at Mark's gospel accounting of Jesus life up until chapter eight, you'll see record of numerous miracles that he performed before this time he had spoken to many large crowds. People were coming out to hear what this man was saying, what Jesus was teaching. Word about him was spreading. He had shared many parables with them, spiritual stories, stories to illustrate spiritual realities.

He is actually starting to cause quite a stir in and around the many communities in the area there, around Israel. And he's developing quite a large following. They didn't have as much peaceful time alone Jesus and his disciples as they used to as the crowds thickened and grew. And so it says in a quieter moment of travel, when they're traveling from one place to another on the road out in nature, well, it's likely quite quiet. He asked his disciples a very unique and interesting question.

He went on with his disciples, the text said, to the villages of Caesarea, Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, who do people say that I am, that I am.

It's another open ended question. He's inviting more conversation.

It acknowledges or Assumes that something is happening. Jesus is assuming or acknowledging. There's a lot of chatter about him going on. There are many opinions flying around about him. People are talking and he wants to know what they're saying.

As he's gotten more and more famous, it's obvious to the disciples something is going on. Chatter is rising, and Jesus is saying, hey, let's talk about it. But he's asking more specifically,

let's talk about what they're saying about who I am. It's not an often asked question. I've never asked it before.

I did just sort of ask it to the children, but I've never outright asked this question, who are people saying I am? Maybe you haven't either. Maybe you've asked a different genre of this question. When you've shown up and people say, hey, we were just talking about you, you might have asked the question, well, what were you saying? What were you saying?

But you probably didn't say, well, who do you think I am?

It's a unique question we could deduct from this question that in Jesus eyes, what people are giving voice to regarding their belief about his identity must be quite important.

He phrases this question very intentionally. Who do people say I am? I am?

Well, they answered him.

There's a lot of opinions. Jesus.

Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others one of the prophets. And on it goes back then, just as there is now. There are many opinions in the world about Jesus. He remains the most talked about and written about man in world history. By far the most talked about and written about man in all of humanity.

Opinions are still rampant, ideas about him are still flying around.

And Jesus knew this back then. And so he asked his disciples, hey, what are people saying about me? And more specifically, who are they saying I am?

Well, then he turned to them again and he asked a more personal, direct question.

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It's almost like Jesus asked a safe, information gathering question on the current gossip about his identity in order to get to the asking of a far more personal and direct question for each of his disciples about their true convictions regarding who they each believed he was.

He asked them, who do you say that I am? Ever been in a classroom where the teacher asks a very personal, direct, specific question that nobody wants to answer? That awkward silence sits there and no one wants to step out and voice an opinion or share a conviction? Have you ever been asked a personal question? Where you were hesitant to answer it.

When we answer a very specific, direct and personal question, we're risking a little. We're risking being wrong. If a teacher is asking, we might be wrong, we might be corrected if we're wrong. We don't necessarily like to be corrected, especially in public, but we don't like to be wrong. Our pride doesn't like that.

We may be risking being laughed at or rejected or ostracized, criticized for our answer. We definitely fight for free speech, but in certain settings, sometimes we don't feel free to share our personal convictions and opinions. Sometimes it takes an enormous amount of courage to step out and in a word, be vulnerable with what we believe, what we're convicted of.

I don't know if you've ever been in a setting where you've been asked directly, specifically, personally, who did you vote for?

Who did you vote for?

What do you believe about abortion?

What do you believe? Do you believe it's right or wrong? Have you ever stolen anything from anyone?

Are you being honest with your expense account?

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Specific, direct, personal questions. Jesus has gone from a safe question to a riskier question. Who do you say that I am? And if we bring it to the modern day, who do you say that Jesus is? What's his identity?

Who is he?

Well, Peter stepped forth with, I don't know, great zeal, great courage. I don't know. He was a feisty man if you study him in the Bible. But he stepped forward with an answer. You are the Christ, the son of the living God.

Peter says. All of these opinions floating around about Jesus and Peter steps out with a confident answer. You are the Christ, the son of the living God. Christ comes from the Greek word Christos. It means messiah or anointed one.

You're the long awaited one. You're the Messiah. You're the hope of the world. You're the one anointed by God. It's a bold confession.

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By his parents, Jesus is going to rename him Peter. Blessed are you, Simon. You're human. You came from your parents. He's expressing Peter's humanity.

Blessed are you as a mere man, son of Jonah. To emphasize it more, you're the son of another man. But I bless you for this confession.

And then he says this, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. This didn't come from some opinion of another man or woman, not from flesh and blood. But Almighty God in heaven showed you this about me. It's a spiritual revelation. It's something that has come into your spirit by God's spirit.

So you understood beyond comprehension of the human mind, who I am. Jesus is saying to Peter, blessed are you, Simon, as a mere man, son of Jonah, for God has spoken to you about me, that he blessed him personally, specifically by name.

And so we focus on the question today. Who do you say that he is?

It must be a very important question for Jesus to ask it this way. The most influential man in all of history. What does your life say about what you believe about him?

Could this be the most important question we'll ever answer?

Could the answer to this question of who he is be the answer to last week's question, what are we all looking for? What are we all longing for? What are we all wanting? To help narrow down and simplify people's approach to this question, the great author C.S. Lewis wrote an excerpt in his book Mere Christianity, where he argues that Jesus himself only left three options open to us in answering this question.

In his writing, he says this. He's trying to prevent anyone from saying something really foolish that people often say about Jesus in their answer about who he is. Don't say this. He said, I'm

ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say.

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And if you call him a great moral teacher, you're missing what he said. He was not a great moral teacher. He was that as a part of who he was. But if you add some of the other things he said about himself, you have to claim he's crazy, he's a deceiver, or he was who he said he was. But this idea of Jesus just being a prophet, or just being a teacher, or a mere man who was confused himself, that might be right.

But those other ideas, they show your own ignorance if you answer the question that way. And by the way, many religions in the world answer the question of Jesus identity that way. As a prophet, as a priest, as another rabbi.

We must make our choice. CS Writes, either this man was and is the Son of God, or else he was a madman, crazy man, or a great deceiver, something worse. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher or just a prophet or a priest. He himself has not left that option open to us. He did not intend to.

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He is the beginning of the firstborn from among the dead. He is the offer of eternal life. He is the preeminent one. In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell through him, to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth, in heaven. He is the mediator between a fallen humanity and God Himself, through His peace offered by his shed blood on the cross.

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This is the spirit of the Antichrist which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

If all this is true Jesus, question of what do we each believe about his identity must be quite important.

Romans 10:9 says, if if you and I confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved. If we don't, we stand condemned already.

We're going to move into A time of communion.

Communion is a partaking of the gift of Jesus, the sacrificial gift of Jesus. But it's more than that.

Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth saying, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the death of our Savior until he comes again.

We have open communion here at Nazareth. That means if you have acknowledged Jesus as your Savior, as your Lord, confessed him as Christ, when you walk down here, you're proclaiming him as Lord with your actions. But the Word also says we are to proclaim him with our mouths and say he is Lord.

I want to invite you, if you are a believer in Christ, to join us in this celebration.

But if you haven't yet received revelation of who he really is, if you haven't yet come to understand deep in your soul that he's the long awaited one, the Messiah, the hope of the world, the one from whom all things stem, maybe don't come down here and pretend like you do.

But if in the quietness of this moment, you feel his spirit calling you to believe, maybe right now you could confess. You sense the Spirit saying this is true.

Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. I believe.

And then if you acknowledge that, then you come. We all have to answer this question for ourselves. And Jesus is still echoing it down through history. Who do you say that I am? Let's pray together.

Father, I am mindful that the Scriptures tell us that we will each individually stand before your judgment seat.

And the crucial question we will answer on that day is what we came to believe about your son, Jesus and the good news that you shared with us about him.

Give us ears to hear, Father, and eyes to see what is really true of him. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

"A Poignant Self-Assessment Question"

May 31, 2026

Pastor Tim Boettger

Well again, it's great to have you here in worship with us this morning. This opportunity we have to gather together to encourage each other in our faith journeys. I would like to welcome you also, if you're a visitor or guest who's with us for the first time. It is great to have you with us. We do hope the Lord touches you in some way, encourages you in your heart and makes himself known to you in the time that we spend here together.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for this chance to be in this room that we can gather freely in. I thank you for the freedoms that we enjoy in this country, in this nation. We know that it comes as a privilege and honor of those who have gone before us, who wanted these things, a place where we could have freedom to pursue you without fear of harm, pursue our faith. And so we ask that as we're gathered here and we've taken time to do this, you would meet us where we're at, encourage us and strengthen us by your word.

We pray it in Jesus name. Amen. I want to thank also those who have chosen to join our church family here and their teamwork and partnership rowing with us in the kingdom of God, working together. We appreciate all the service of so many in our church family that give time and energy and resources to the advancement of God's kingdom through this part of his church family here in the world. If you're able.

Out of reverence for God's word, we stand. And so if you're able, I would invite you, as we read our gospel reading here today, to stand. Our gospel reading today is found in John's accounting of Jesus life. And it's near the beginning of his ministry time on the earth. And it is this time where John is sort of backing up and passing the baton to Jesus.

This is John the Baptist, who was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus. And after he did that and tilled the ground of the soils of the souls of the people, at that time he started to withdraw himself and point to Jesus as Jesus came on the scene. John, chapter 1, verses 35 through 39. After John baptized Jesus, the Next day, John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, look, the Lamb of God.

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, what are you looking for? They said, rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? Come, he replied, and you will see. So they went and saw where he was staying and they spent the day with him.

The good news of our Lord. You may be seated. We're beginning this morning a series entitled Questions Jesus asked. Questions Jesus asked. I want to give you some interesting facts about questions at the start of this series.

I didn't know this. I was just surprised when I started looking into the way questions work in our relationships and between us as individuals. The first statistic I came across was that the average 4 year old asks 437 questions from a day. 437 average. During one scientific study, researchers found that children ages 14 months to 5 years while they're awake and active, ask an average of 107 questions an hour.

That's more than one a minute. Can we just pause and pray for the young parents among us?

So many questions. Harvard researchers found that asking someone for their opinion lights up the neural pathways in their brain associated with with pleasure and reward. We take joy in answering questions. It does something to us biologically.

When a question is posed to you or to me, it forces our brain's thought process into a reflex. And we like to name things. It forces our thought process into a reflex that scientists have labeled instinctive elaboration, requiring us to more deeply consider one specific area of thought than we would have if we hadn't been asked the question.

Now that's true for everyone except politicians. You very seldom hear see them answer a question directly.

And what's amazing is that's also true of Jesus.

It's fascinating when you study Jesus response to questions and the whole idea of questions around you.

It must have been about four months ago when I read this statistic for the first time. I can't believe I haven't ever heard this in my spiritual journey. Having walked with Christ since I was 8 years old, 50 years, and I'd never seen these stats before. We have record in the gospel accounts of Jesus being asked approximately 187 questions. 187 he answers directly, less than 10 of them.

And he himself asked well over 300 questions. He asked questions about people's faith, their doubts, their anxieties, their worries, their financial attitudes, their relationship with money and other things, their beliefs, their ideas. He asked questions about their bodies, their health, about eternity, about what they were thinking about, about the condition of their hearts, and on and on and on it goes. Over 300 questions posed by Jesus, the greatest leader, the most influential leader of all times, used primarily questions to guide people's thinking and their thoughts, to direct them in life, to nurture them spiritually. When I started looking into this, I just kept thinking to myself, Tim, you got to get better at asking good questions.

If that's how Jesus operated so much of the time, you need to get better. And so then I said to myself, why not just learn from Jesus? Why not just learn how he packaged questions and then start to use them myself? And in order to do that, I decided let's do a whole summer series on it looking at just some of these questions. Obviously we'll not get to near 300 of them, but if we

look at these things and consider them, we might just learn about Jesus, powerful leadership and his skill in this.

So today we begin looking at one of Jesus questions. It's a very unique question. I want to read it again for you. John writes this. The next day John was there again with two of his disciples and he saw Jesus passing by and he said, look, the Lamb of God.

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus turning around. Jesus saw them following and asked, what are you looking for?

What are you looking for?

It's an interesting question. I want to make a few observations about it. First of all, it's an open ended question. Some questions are asked and they just require a short answer. Oftentimes we use little curt questions like this because we don't really want to engage a person very much.

And so we ask a short question and a yes or no or maybe or a fine comes back to us in a closed type question. But Jesus is asking here an open ended question. He's inviting elaboration on an answer. He's looking to engage these two individuals. This is an invitation to dialogue.

It highlights sort of the personal interactive nature of Jesus. He turns around and says, what are you looking for? And he's willing to listen to their response. He's to willing opening a conversation. Secondly, it assumes something of the hearer.

It assumes that there is some intention going on in the hearer's hearts. What are you looking for? Assumes you're actively doing something, you're pursuing something, there's something out there somewhere that you don't have that you wish you had and you're actively trying to figure out what that is or where it is. It assumes something. It's an open ended question.

It assumes something of the hearer. And if you would agree with me, I think you would say this is an often asked question. It's often asked in our world. Personally, I get asked it all the time. Now, Probably most often I get asked it by my wife.

And she adds a little caveat at the end. Hey Tim, what are you looking for? Your billfold again?

Your glasses, your phone.

Now she has a little different edge to it. In the kitchen, I'll open the refrigerator. At times not really sure what I'm looking for. And I'll open it now. You understand this is her domain.

She's in charge of the refrigerator. So she gets a little nervous when I go to the refrigerator because she has it where she likes it. And so when I stand there and I open it and if it's more than one or two seconds that I'm peering into that she does get nervous and she asks the question, hey babe, what are you looking for?

And then she says, maybe I could help you find it.

I get asked it in grocery stores. I don't go in there very often, but sometimes I'm looking for something in there because I've been given a direction of something to pick up. And I get in there and I don't know what happens to me, but I get confused in grocery stores and people must be able to see that because it's not just workers who are there, but it's also other patrons of these stores. And I just had this happen the other day. I was in there and I was looking for a particular item and this other customer said, sir, can I help you?

I said, yeah, you really could. I'm looking for such and such. She said, ah, I don't know where that is. And there was a co worker right there. So she asked the co worker, hey, do you know where such and such is?

And she said, yeah, it's over there on aisle seven. She turned to me and said, hey, over there on aisle seven. She said. And then she said this. That's the difference between men and women.

Women aren't afraid to ask for directions, but literally said that.

I get asked this question on the farm by my children when I'm a little agitated. Dad, what are you missing? What tool do you need?

It gets asked a lot.

But this question rings a little bit different, at least in my ears. I don't know if you'd agree with me when I consider Jesus asking, as if he doesn't know, what are you looking for?

It's an open ended question inviting dialogue with a personal God. It assumes that we're searching for something, that we're taking initiative in some way. It's an often used question, but there's a context to this question. Let me read it again. The next day, John was there again with two of his disciples.

These were followers of John. These were disciplined people. Disciples are disciplining themselves in a direction to learn and to grow and to mature. They're giving their hearts and minds and souls to the educating of their whole being. A disciple is a disciplined person.

They've been following John, learning from John, they're committed to John. But when he saw Jesus passing by. And understand this is John's mindset, he says this about himself, I must begin to decrease so Jesus can increase. And he's handing the baton to Jesus because he said of Jesus, he's much greater than me. I am unworthy to even tie his sandals.

And so he says, when Jesus shows up again the next day, he says, look, the Lamb of God, the sacrificial one, the one sent by our Almighty God to pay the penalty for our sins, that's him, he says, and when the two disciples heard this, they abandoned John and they followed Jesus.

Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, what are you looking for?

What are you looking for?

Let's consider Jesus asking this question in a few different contexts. These two men are making a great change in their life and Jesus is asking them why? What's driving when you're leaving one job, maybe you've quit, maybe you've been fired, I don't know. When you decide to make a major change in your profession, direction of your life, what if Jesus showed up and asked you, what are you looking for?

Are you looking for more satisfaction in your work? Something that fits your gifts better? More money?

What's driving you?

What if Jesus stood out here at the door every Sunday morning when you got up and came to worship and he said, hey, welcome to worship.

When you go in there to that worship center, What are you looking for?

What are you trying to get out of this?

What's driving you?

What if Jesus showed up sometime when you were scrolling online in that doom scroll and he just put his hand over your phone and said, hey, hey, hey. You mind me asking what you're doing there?

What are you looking for?

What are you looking for?

When you're mapping out your schedule for a day or a week or a year and mapping out your children's activities, your budget, your time?

What if Jesus was sitting There beside you asking this question.

How about when you're heading into the department store for the third time this week or you're placing your 12th order Amazon.

And Jesus shows up, do you feel this question? What are you looking for?

How about when you're grumbling or complaining to your boss or a co worker or a family member about something or someone?

What if he asked you then?

Or when you're heading into a casino or a pub or club, How would you answer them then?

How about maybe if you've ever done this like I have, you're dropping names of famous people you've met or neat things you've done, the gathering of people.

What if he just slipped up beside you and said, you know, while you're sharing all those things, what are you looking for?

What are you looking for? It's a good question, isn't it?

It's the most often asked question of Jesus in the scriptures that he asks some form of it. What or who are you looking for? It's a deeply probing question. It's a question about the longings of the human heart, the desires. It's not easily answered.

Now this is just my opinion here, but I think it's a grace filled question. It's just grace.

God coming to us and asking us to be honest with ourselves, to be self aware in deep love and service to us. He asks us to think on, reflect on and consider our actions and our activities and what's driving them.

Why do you think he would ask this question more often than any other question? Why?

When you come in here, what are you looking for? When you're going there? What are you looking for when you're doing this, what are you looking for? Why would he ask this more than any other question? I think it's because he knows something about us.

When I graduated from high school in 1986, there was a band, it's still around Today, it's called U2. And they wrote a song that became very popular and the song had these lyrics in it. I have climbed the highest mountain Mountains I've run Through the fields I've run I've crawled I've scaled these city walls these city walls and then the chorus just sings again and again. But I still haven't found what I'm looking for no, I still haven't found what I'm looking for it gets us in touch, this question, with deeper longings, the spiritual longings in the core of our heart and our soul. Maybe Jesus used this question more often because he knows that in our current state here on the earth, we're all seekers of a sort of in our broken humanity we do often because of our sinful nature, settle for far less than we should.

And he wants to keep us seeking for more.

Not live beneath our privilege as his people, but live into the fullness of the way he designed us not to settle for less. The great author C.S. Lewis came across this idea as he was studying the Scriptures. A great theologian as he looked through Jesus teaching and his writing. He wrote in his book *The Weight of Glory*.

He said, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition and the control of things when infinite joy, infinite freedom, infinite peace, the hope of eternity is available to us all.

Maybe Jesus is trying to draw us out of our temporary pleasures and false securities into Him.

What are you looking for?

One of my absolute favorite passages in scripture. Scripture. It's found in Acts 17. If you've been around here, you probably have come to see that it simply says this.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth.

He is the highest Being there is. He's the Mekhishak of Israel the Great. I am the one who was and is and is to come. He was there before us.

He'll be there forever. He is not served by human hands, as if he needs anything. Rather, He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else from one man. He made all the nations that they should inhabit the whole earth. He marked out their appointed times in history, the boundaries of their lands.

And he did this why? So that we might seek him, perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from us, very near. And then the writer of Acts, Luke says this.

For in him we live and move and have our being in Him. The psalmist understood this. King David as a deer pants after water. So my soul longs for Thee, O God. Where can I go and meet with God?

My soul thirsts for the living God. My soul thirsts for Him. What are you looking for?

We're far too easily pleased.

After a life of seeking and searching, St. Augustine boldly opened his spiritual autobiography, which he entitled *Confessions*. In deep honest vulnerability. The saint of God began his book saying, you have made us, O Lord, for yourself.

And our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.

We're all looking for Him. Everyone on the planet is looking for Him. Him.

Let's read the text again. Turning around, Jesus saw them following. They had left John. John had pointed him to Jesus.

Jesus turned around and asked them, what are you looking?

They said they couldn't be that vulnerable.

They said, well, where are you staying?

Where are you staying?

Come. Jesus said, come and you will see.

So they went. They saw where he was staying and they spent that day with Him.

I hope you come here to meet with Him. Him.

He invites us to come. Learn from him, grow in him, be filled with him and His Word. As we enter this summer. I hope you'll come.

As we look to learn from his questions, open our hearts to what he's asking us. Being very self reflective and honest before him, vulnerable and open with the one who already knows everything. I hope you'll come learn from the greatest leader and teacher of all times, Jesus the Great. I am. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for the chance to gather in this room and seek you freely as we can. We are creatures who are far too easily pleased. Forgive us for taking your invitation so lightly, for finding what we think is great satisfaction in things that are designed to just be temporary for us. I ask that as we walk through this summer as a church family, you would search our hearts, unshackle us from anchors and false supports that we rely upon and move more fully into greater and greater dependence on you.

Not just as we gather here, but on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, learn to have our beings in you and live and move in you as your people, as your temples here on the earth.

Thank you, Father. For each person in this room.

Speak to each of us as we need to hear from you.

Help us hear these questions you're asking us and be honest with you about the answers.