

# Lord of Whose Life?

Matt 16:13-20 Pastor Bill Mosley 8-23-20

One Sunday night years ago I was completely voiceless. I was sick. I self-medicated until Thursday. I surrendered and went to see the dr. He made me mad. He told me I was wrong and then what I had to do to get well. That was not in my plans.

So most of that week I was sick. I did some few things, but they were in between the times of fever and ache and no energy. I kept planning bigger things I wanted to be doing -- in a couple hours or tomorrow morning. But most of the time there was no energy and I couldn't do anything. So I didn't have a choice, and I didn't like it.

*I felt really powerless. I was not in control. It's a helpless, powerless, out of control feeling.*

**It's an unnatural condition for human beings. We want to be in control of our own selves, to have the power to exercise options, to make choices, to make things happen.**

I see people take control all the time. At the most basic level, babies do it. When a parent starts to leave, and the baby sees what's happening, that he no longer has their attention, he cries and complains and pleads. And if a little doesn't work, a lot must be better! But when he sees that carrying on doesn't work, he quits. He knows he has control of something, and it's not the parent. It's him. It's good he learns that early. Some people never learn it.

You see it on the highway when a car behind you passes you up, only to slow down after they pass. That driver doesn't want anyone in front of him. They want to be in control. And speeders and people who pass where there's a yellow stripe, these are just people who don't want to think that there's anything in control of them, even the law.

They know that there is, there has to be, but in this small thing, if they can get away with flaunting the law, they are in control.

But the fact is, they are not in control. I am not in control, you are not in control. President Trump is not in control. Even the pope is not in control. The most powerful person there is, is not in control. There's always something beyond our control.

AND ON SOME LEVEL, PERHAPS ONLY SUBCONCIOUS, THAT MAKES US MAD, ANGRY, FRUSTRATED, REBELLIOUS. MOST ANYBODY AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER DOES SOMETHING TO EXERCISE HIS CONTROL, TO DEMONSTRATE SOME POWER OVER SOMETHING, IF IT'S ONLY TO DISOBEY, OR CHOOSE TO SAY BAD WORDS, HIT OR BREAK SOMETHING, OR DO SOMETHING BAD FOR US.

Until we have faith. Or more precisely, until faith finds us.

Faith means trusting in God -- that he has power. Faith is giving up our power to God, giving him all the options.

You've heard stories about poor people having more faith, about people who are dying, about alcoholics and addicts and death row convicts who've found God, and came out an evangelist or minister. Why are these stories so common?

Well, if you're going to surrender all to Jesus, isn't it easier when you don't have much to surrender? So it's easier for the poor, who have little. If you're giving God all the options in your life, isn't it easier if you don't have any, like when you're in prison? If human beings are going to ask God for help, isn't it easier when you've finally hit the bottom of the ditch, and found that you have no strength or power, like an alcoholic or addict?

You've probably heard the saying that there are no atheists in foxholes. Such faith is easy and cheap. *Shouldn't we instead admire folks who have something to give up, who have some pride to surrender before they can have faith?*

When people talk about their faith, I listen for the subject of their sentences. Are they talking about what THEY do: "I prayed to God, I accepted Jesus, I received the Holy Spirit, I love the Lord, etc."? *OR Are they talking about what God has done and is doing: "God accepted me, God received*

*me, Jesus died for me, God forgives me, God loves me, etc.?"* A faith confession properly comes as a revelation, a gift from God.

I've had this brief conversation a few times: Someone asks, "Do you love the Lord?" I respond, "Yes, but more importantly, God loves me." Faith and our confessions of Jesus begin with God. "I believe that I can't believe," to summarize Luther's explanation to the Third Article of the Creed.

And that's actually what's happening with Peter and the other disciples at Caesarea Phillipi.

This confession by Peter that Jesus is the Christ is just the starting point of all faith in Jesus. But what does it mean?

Well, not much, really. **But** everything else comes from it. For Peter, the rock, backslides almost immediately from this high point, and we know in the time of trial he denies even knowing Jesus. Caesarea Phillipi is not his shining moment, but it is the moment that his faith grows from.

As constructed by Matthew, this was an 'AHA' moment -- and the church is built on that insight. Peter and the apostles didn't possess that faith, but were possessed by it.

They have a long way to go from here, and they really don't know what it means. But they do go all the way. Peter became a leader in the early church, eventually ending up in Rome, maybe even while Paul was there. Peter was arrested and executed by the Romans. They took him to be crucified, and Peter said, "I am not worthy to die as my Lord did." So the Romans crucified Peter upside down.

Real faith is not a list of beliefs, such as our creeds, or even standing for what is right or wrong. Real faith is surrendering our will and control, our power and strength to be one with Jesus, the Christ. To spend a life knowing him, following him, living as he lived, living with Jesus as Lord. Even when you would rather be king.

Mother Teresa in *\_A Gift for God\_*

"We all long for heaven where God is but we have it in our power to be in heaven with Him right now--to be happy with Him at this very moment. But being happy with Him now means:

loving as He loves,  
helping as He helps,  
giving as He gives,  
serving as He serves,  
rescuing as He rescues,  
being with Him for all the 24 hours,  
touching Him in His distressing disguise."

**Have faith. Surrender your pride. Give God control of your life.**

Lord, you are the Christ, the Son of God. We give you our strength, our power, our options, that we may say no to everything that makes it more difficult to say yes to you.