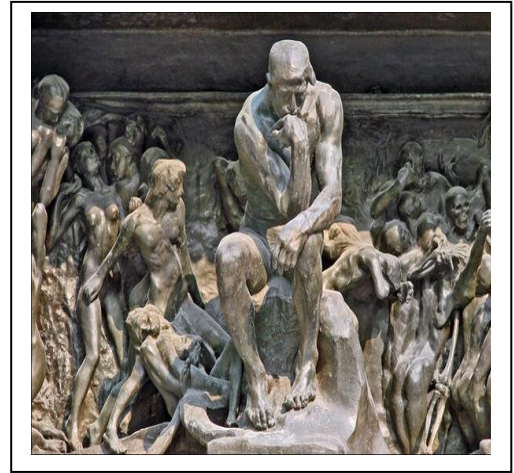


Sunday 9th October 2022
What Business are we in?

Scripture: Matthew 16:13-20.

Last week we read Scripture from Nehemiah faced with the ruins of the wall in Jerusalem. We learned that Nehemiah had a God given vision to solve the problem and this was successful.



We also need a vision to solve the problem of our failure to proactively bring people to know the hope and peace only found in Jesus Christ.

What is happening in our Scripture reading this morning?

Jesus and His disciples are in Caesarea Philippi, which was located several miles north of the Sea of Galilee in the territory ruled by Philip, whose brother was Herod.

All around the city was evidence of paganism – temples and idols abounded. I believe Chelsea is not much different.

What do you see when you are out and about in our community?

Do you see any pagan influences – places you can gamble and play the pokies; pubs, bottle shops and even cafes that sell alcohol; tobacconists; drag shows; signs and placards that misrepresent God and His love.

We read in Matthew, that the disciples were part of a quiz.

Jesus asked two questions only. The first one was: “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

The disciples answered Jesus’ question with the common view – Jesus was one of the great prophets come back to life. This belief may have stemmed from Deuteronomy 18:18 where God said He would raise up a

prophet from among the people. It seems all of the disciples made a comment and had their own theory.

But this was just a warm-up question. The second question was the “real test” – the most important question anyone will ever answer.

Jesus asked, “But what about you? Who do you say that I am?”

I can imagine a sudden quiet, as the disciples were trying to work out their answer. Perhaps they had been confident answering the first question, but not the second.

This question is much harder to answer because it is personal – if you get it wrong, it’s you who is at fault. We don’t want to get this question wrong because our eternity hangs in the balance.

I imagine this second question had the air thick with tension. Possibly the disciples slowly turned their heads in Peter’s direction, just hoping he would speak up as he often did – and thus, get them all off the hook.

Do you like playing quizzes, such as Trivia.

I know when we were planning our last Trivia afternoon, there were people who wanted to sit at the table with someone who they believed would know all the answers.

Peter probably was feeling uncomfortable with the silence too so he lifted his voice with boldness and a sense of power and said: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

I imagine the other disciples breathed a sigh of relief and perhaps even Jesus smiled. Peter felt a surge of pride but in the next few minutes he was shot down as Jesus basically said: “Blessed are you Simon, Son of Jonah, but you cheated on the test!!”

What? Yes, Jesus says to him, you got the answer from someone else! Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

In essence we all cheat death and judgement by getting our answer from God. There is no other way! We don't get there by having a high IQ or studying the right books. It isn't intelligence, family heritage or nationality that gets us to heaven – it is the grace of God. Only if we accept His love and help can we truly know Jesus.

In creating our Vision it is of utmost importance for us to know that everything about this church begins and ends with a single question: **“Who is Jesus to you?”** Church begins with Jesus – who He is and what He has done? It's all about Jesus and if it begins to be about something else, then it stops being the church.

I want us all to stop for a moment and write down the answer to the question – “Who is Jesus to me?”

There are pens and paper available. You do not have to share your answers, but I encourage you not to cheat – don't look to someone else to answer this question – it is between you and God. Those watching live stream can also participate in this activity.

After activity: if in your answer you said:

- Jesus is the King of Kings then our Church will reflect that.
- Jesus has all authority of heaven and earth and is always present then our Church will be powerful.
- Jesus can transform lives, then our Church will be a place for the healing of humanity.

However, if you answered that Jesus was only a good prophet, is not God's Son but just a good person, then our Church will be just that too. Good people who say good things and who determines what "good" really means – only God does.

Jesus went on to say that Peter was now the rock on which He will build His church and the gates of Hell will not overcome it. Jesus used the Aramaic word for rock – kepha to describe Peter's role and the church. The rock on which Jesus would build His church has been identified as:

1. Jesus Himself – His work of salvation by dying for us on the cross.
2. Peter – the first great leader, confessor and founding member of the church.

In only one sentence, Jesus says more about how the church should be than countless theologians say in a library full of books!!!

For one thing, it is Jesus who builds the church. Peter reminds Christians that we are the church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.

All believers are joined into this church by faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. It is faith like Peter's that is the foundation of Christ's kingdom.

If we are building the church, it isn't THE church. It is Christ who casts our vision – we are merely conduits to what Jesus is doing here. It is Christ who builds Chelsea Community Church of Christ. And the church that Jesus builds is unstoppable – the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

The image I placed on this sermon is of the Thinker. This was a sculpture created by Auguste Rodin and sits on top of his other great masterpiece – the Gates of Hell. Many people believe the Thinker sits

alone as many images remove the Gates of Hell sculpture underneath. The Thinker is contemplating an eternity of judgement, separated from God.

If you and I sit back in our fortress frightened by all that seems to threaten us, sitting on top of the Gates of Hell, then countless people will remain without knowing the love that God has for them.

We need to be on the offensive and storm the gates of people's personal hell. This is what it means to be the church – according to Jesus.

Who are we?

What are we?

What are we doing here?

Our answer to these questions have eternal and serious consequences for Chelsea Community Church of Christ and our surrounding community.