



**Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture**

**SERMON TEXT:** Matthew 16:13–20

**KEY POINT(S):** All true disciples must understand who Jesus is and what he is about.

**FOR LEADERS**

- **Welcome!** – *Welcome to the first Community Season of the 2019–2020 ministry year! Whether this is your first time leading, or your hundredth, THANK YOU for your willingness to help shepherd our church toward Jesus! We pray that God would bless you, your group, and your time together this year to bear fruit for Jesus’ kingdom.*
- **Weekly Resources** – *As a reminder, the weekly resources (discussion guides, group videos, podcasts, etc.) are posted for you each week both on the Realm Leader’s Group, as well as on our website at [emergencenj.org/weeklyresources](http://emergencenj.org/weeklyresources).*
- **New Season, Same Book** – *We’re continuing our study through the book of Matthew, but please be mindful of anyone in your group who may be returning from a summer break or is new to your group. Treat your first meeting as if it’s brand new for everyone, and take 5–10 minutes at the beginning of your study to help people know what they can and should expect this season.*

**GETTING STARTED**

**[1] Communities Video** – Watch this week’s *community extras* video.

**[2] Icebreaker** – What was the best part of your summer?

**[3] Opener** – What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly helpful or eye-opening?

**WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT I AM?**

In the sermon this week, Pastor Ryan said that there are two primary questions that we need to ask when it comes to Jesus. The first of these is “Who is he?” Jesus begins this dialogue in Matthew 16 when he gathers his disciples together and asks them, “Who do the people say that the Son of Man is?”

**Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 16:13–14.**

**[1]** What are some common answers people might give to this question today? If you were to ask someone on the street, “Who is Jesus?” what might he or she say?

Verse 14 shows us that the common opinion about Jesus at that time connected him with a number of Jewish prophetic figures (Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, etc.). Many people today might do the same with figures like Gandhi, Buddha, or Mohammad. Pastor Ryan went on to explain why seeing Jesus as “just a prophet or great religious leader” is not enough.

**[2]** Why do you think it is not enough to simply view Jesus as a great religious leader? In what ways is Jesus different than these other people of faith?

**[3]** In what ways do you think a person might minimize the truth of who Jesus is to try to redefine him to their own liking? Have you ever seen this happen with people you know? Have you ever done this yourself?



**Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture**

*Leaders: The chief difference between Jesus and any other person of faith, whether a biblical prophet or some other religious leader, is that everyone else claimed to teach important spiritual truths, but Jesus actually claimed to be God. As Ryan pointed out in this sermon, each of us has to decide whether we believe this is true or false—there is nothing in between. Still, it is not uncommon for people to simply like the “idea” of Jesus, and to redefine him to reflect their own opinions. In the same way, it is not uncommon to like the idea of heaven, but not if it means confronting their own sin.*

**WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?**

In verse 15, Jesus shifts the question to his disciples, asking them, “Who do you say that I am?”

**Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 16:15–17.**

- [4]** Who was Jesus to you when you first heard of him? How has your view of him changed over time?
- [5]** In the sermon, Ryan mentioned that this is the single most important question we could ever ask ourselves. If that’s the case, why do you think so many people aren’t interested in Jesus?
- [6]** In your experience, where have you seen someone move from not caring at all about Jesus to beginning to seriously grapple with questions about who he is? What were some of the reasons for that shift?
- [7]** Who in your own life would you like to experience a similar kind of change? What steps are you personally taking to help bring them closer to Jesus?

*Leaders: Keep in mind that this is the first week of Communities. If you have anyone new in your group who either isn’t a Christian, you don’t know where they stand with Jesus, or is simply unfamiliar with your group, make sure to ask these questions and keep them general as opposed to specific. We will take steps throughout our study to get increasingly more granular and specific to us as individuals.*

**I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH**

The second question that Pastor Ryan said we need to answer is, “What is Jesus up to?” Our answer comes directly from Jesus in his response to Peter’s declaration of him as the Christ, the Son of God. In the guidebook for this week, Pastor Doug highlights the importance of Jesus’ plan not involving merely individuals, but rather all of us together, working as one body to accomplish the mission.

- [8]** In what way is Jesus’ communal plan for the church far better than simply sending a bunch of individuals? What are some of the common pitfalls that happen to people who simply see their faith as “their own” and “personal,” apart from their identity within church?
- [9]** It’s clear from the passage this week that Jesus is about building his church. But what about us? What part do we personally play in that mission? In what ways are you an active participant in Jesus’ mission?

*Leaders: A very common problem with individualized faith is that it fails to truly bear fruit for the gospel and for Jesus’ mission. This is because people who see their faith as only a personal thing tend to avoid taking steps to actually participate in bringing others to the joy that is Christ, becoming reclusive critics of Jesus’ church rather than participants in it.*

**PRAYER**

- [1]** Pray that God would bless this Communities Season to be a time of growth for your group!

