

**12 Pentecost  
August 23, 2020**

**In the name of God, who in Jesus,  
taught us the meaning of unconditional Love.  
AMEN**

From our Gospel reading this morning we heard that when Peter declared that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus said that *God* had revealed that truth to Peter. *God* does INDEED provide revelations to us mortals. It is as if God wants us to *know* that he is in touch with us. The Bible is full of stories of persons who have received revelations from God, helping us to know that a revelation may happen to anyone, anytime, any place.

The following little story is a rather amusing way to make that point. // It seems that a rather new, young minister felt that something was lacking in his ministry. So, one day when he was in conversation with a much older clergyman about this, the senior man suggested that what the young man needed was a revelation. "Well," the young man asked, "How do I get a revelation?" The elder man said, "I suggest that you go out into the country. When you come to a place where you can be alone, get out of your car, go look for a log where you can sit, and wait quietly. I believe that as you sit there looking at the beauty of God's creation, you may be surprised by a revelation."

Later that week the young man decided to follow the advice he had been given. He got in his car, drove out to farm country, came to a place that looked inviting, stopped, got out, and started walking. He saw some trees that seemed to beckon him. So, he climbed over a fence to get to them. In the process of climbing, he tore his pants. But he kept on going. Eventually, he reached the thicket of trees, found a log, sat down and began to just sit there in silence.///

Almost immediately some dark clouds hovered over him. Lightning and thunder became disturbing. It began to rain quite heavily. While he was getting soaked, he said to himself, "I'm not going to get a revelation here. Bad idea. I'm leaving." So he did.

The next day, the old mentor asked if he had done what had been suggested. The young minister said, "I went to the country; I saw some trees; I stopped my car; I climbed over a fence and tore my pants. I found a log in the woods. I sat down and waited. Then a big black cloud came over the trees. There was lightning and thunder shaking the earth. Then a ferocious downpour came and I got soaked. All I could think of while I was getting drenched, was...what a fool I was."

The old minister's eyes glinted and a grin came to his lips. "See!" he said enthusiastically. "I told you that you would receive a revelation." ////

Our scripture reading today focuses on what might be called Peter's revelation. It happened in the northern Jordan Valley, a place known as Caesarea Philippi. Jesus and his friends were in that beautiful place where the Jordan River begins. Perhaps they were on a sort of retreat because this was quite north from their usual territory. At any rate, Jesus began to ask them a very pertinent question. In essence it was, "What are people saying? Who are they saying that I am?" Their answers were varied. "John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets."

But THEN, Jesus made the question more personal, and this is where we need to hear him speak to us. He asked directly, "But who do YOU say that I am?" They could not dodge his direct question, and, when you

think of it,... neither can we. // It was Simon Peter who offered his belief: “You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

What Jesus said next is of utmost importance. He responded to Peter by saying, “Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven.” In other words, Peter had received an insight, a revelation, a discernment that Jesus WAS the long-awaited Messiah or Christ (which is the Greek word for Messiah). Jesus was the Christ, and this reality had been revealed to Peter, by God, Jesus said. // What a moment!

Let’s consider how God had prepared Peter to receive this revelation. Notice some of the events involving Peter that are recorded in this Gospel of Matthew, that led up to Peter’s declaration. Beginning with chapter four, we find Jesus calling Simon Peter and his brother Andrew to be his first disciples. Apparently they were so impressed by the charisma of Jesus, his vision and his wisdom, that they consented quickly to be a part of his mission. Otherwise, they certainly would not have “left their nets and followed him” immediately, as the scripture says.

And, we find them observing Jesus “proclaiming the good news of the kingdom” of God. They saw people cured of all kinds of physical, and mental ailments as Jesus ministered to them. They heard the Sermon on the Mount. Otherwise, how would Christ’s enlightening words have been passed along? They heard the Lord’s teaching on loving one’s enemies, how to pray, on trusting God to meet one’s needs, overcoming worry, waiting patiently, and many other important lessons. They were impressed by how inclusive Jesus was...his unique acceptance of everyone, even those who tried to wreck his ministry. // Peter had never heard *anyone* speak like Jesus spoke. Nor had he seen such compassion, such genuine love, and spiritual power as Jesus possessed.

And Peter surely recalled the certainty he felt that he was doing the right thing when he left his fishing trade to follow Jesus. Peter BELIEVED! Therefore, Peter was able to declare “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” I guess all of that is something of a summary of how Peter received a revelation. The question for us today is: Are revelations from God still possible today?//// Well, I’ll tell you my answer. I KNOW that in this congregation of St. Cyprian’s, the answer is YES! ... Because, through the years, *countless* revelations have been shared.

Today, let us begin with realizing that God’s love is so great for us that He WANTS us to have revelations from that Love. God *wants* us to know him personally, in the way Jesus spoke of God as Abba. I believe God *wants* us to have AHA! Moments. Times when the reality of his love for us and his direction for our lives breaks through. Times when suddenly we have a keener understanding of what Jesus Christ is all about. AHA! times when we recognize the power and presence of Christ in our lives. AHA when the amazing revelation of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit comes to us. Times when creative ideas come to us as if from a friendly angel. But, I do believe we have to be receptive; quietly receptive and *expectant* of God’s ways of revelation for us. /// You don’t suppose -We probably need to make more time in our lives to just be quiet with God. As the Psalm says, “Be Still and Know that I am God.” Time to be still and hear God’s message.

Think back to where this all happened. Jesus had hauled the disciples out of their known lakeshore world, out of their rural Judaism, their small world of family. And, so are we, with all that is going on in our world, our schools, our church, our interactions with friends, *we* are being hauled out of our very familiar world into a tougher, harsher reality. And within this new reality for us, Jesus asks *us* in all sorts of ways, and at all kinds of moments: *Who do you say that I am?* After the hesitation and the silence, what answer do WE give?

Hear this, from the poet, Edwin Markham, who told in a poem called *Revelation* how he received spiritual insight:

I made a pilgrimage to find God:  
 I listened for his voice at holy tombs,  
 Searched for the print of his holy feet  
 In dust of shrines and altars; yet turned back  
 With empty heart. But, on the homeward road,  
 A great light came upon me, and I heard  
 God's voice singing in a nesting lark;  
 Felt his sweet wonder in a fragrant rose;  
 Received his blessing from a wayside well;  
 Looked on his beauty in a baby's face;  
 Saw HIS bright hand send a signal from the sun.

Yes, God's revelations can come anytime and any place. In his book *Surprised By Joy*, C.S. Lewis wrote about the revelation that came to *him*, and the title says it all: *Surprised, Surprised by Joy*. Joy was a revelation. But, we may be just as surprised by the *awesome holiness of God* //or by a mystery, as was Moses when he saw the burning bush *unconsumed*. Or by a direct confrontation with the living Christ as was Saul, the persecutor of Christians, when he was knocked off his horse on the Damascus road and ultimately became Saint Paul. Or by a raging thunderstorm as was Martin Luther when he was a young man, which forever changed the course of his life. Or by finding one's heart "strangely warmed" as John Wesley put it while attending a worship service in London.

Yes, a revelation can happen anywhere, anytime. It is impossible to say when God might give us enlightenment or nudge us in one direction or another. All that *can* be said is that it *can* happen, *may well* happen, and sooner or later is *very likely to happen*...if only as our eyes close for the last time. The gift of the Incarnation is that God dwells among us -within us...as much as in heaven. Realizing this, we should *expect* revelations!

So, back to where it all began...in Caesarea Philippi when Jesus asked the disciples: "Who do *you* say that I am?" This is no ordinary moment; no casual question. But, everything depends on their reply. It is Peter who blurts out his short, explosive words. The response from Jesus is immediate. "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, But, my Father in Heaven." There is affection, relief, comradeship. They are all there. On this kind of faith, Jesus can build! This kind of faith is the key to everything! This kind of faith will make the continuation of the work and the mission of Jesus possible!

Peter had it revealed to him that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, and it changed *his* life forever. And, here Jesus asks US: "Who do YOU say that I am?" May we have the revelation that God gave to Peter and declare with certainty that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And may that revelation change *our* lives in every way.

AMEN