

*18 And it came about that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the multitudes say that I am?” 19 And they answered and said, “John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.” 20 And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.” 21 But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, 22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”*

*23 And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 “For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? 26 “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. 27 “But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”*

The totalitarian state of China released on Sunday last week what it calls: The “Outline for the Implementation of the Moral Construction of Citizens in the New Era”

It's a complete morality for the citizens of China that covers everything from raising the flag, how to act in other countries, how enthusiastic to appear when someone is elevated to the official communist party, how to behave on the subway, and it doesn't stop at your front door.

Reading a quote from the Guardian newspaper of London, it says; *Such etiquette should “enhance people’s attitude toward the party and country and organise a collective sense of identity and belonging”, according to the document, released by the party’s central committee and the state council.*

Carl Minzner, China scholar and professor of law at Fordham Law School in New York, said: *“The general goal of these guidelines is to define ‘good’*

*behaviour, and that includes everything from the ethical lessons you might want your children to internalise, from reading Peppa Pig stories to more political concepts of civic virtue – such as how citizens should think of their relationship with respect to their leaders.”*

Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary said this; *Citizens of China are now told that they are responsible for the cultivation of civilized and self-disciplined online behavior, as well as the implementation of an environmentally friendly way of life and manufacturing, the full development of etiquette and courtesy. Citizens are to avoid all uncivilized behavior on the subways, while eating, while drinking, while playing music on speakers. All of those acts, if in public, will be subject to penalties beginning in April. But the big issue here is conformity. Total conformity, the claim of the State upon citizens 24/7, at home and at work, in public and in private. As a matter of fact, the Chinese Communist Party basically denies that distinction between public and private, which is one of the foundational hallmarks of Western civilization and is also that which is consistent with a Biblical worldview, privileging the family over against the overarching demands of the State.*

*It is also clear that this document comes with the power of coercion and now with the power of the modern, hyper-modern surveillance state. China is now using facial recognition technologies and other high technologies and artificial intelligence to aid the state in cracking down, for example, on religious liberty — crushing churches, finding underground believers, crushing any kind of organization that would represent a mediating institution that might in some way limit the power of the State and of the Communist Party. The new moral guidelines make that point explicitly, including language that the government is now to instruct citizens on how to behave properly in all aspects of life. Xi's philosophy of life right down to the details of the dinner table, this is now known as Xi Jinping Thought.*

*Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping have effectively disappeared, which means that Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Thought has now been largely replaced by Xi Jinping Thought.*

Xi Jinping has elevated himself to the position of deity formerly held by the two older rulers now displaced. He is a modern messiah.

Why is this important? How does this matter to us and what can it possibly mean in connection with our passage in Luke this morning?

In the United States, it costs zilch to be a christian. Nobody cares. Nobody's interested. The most common response in 2019 might be something like, "I'm also very spiritual but I don't need organised religion for my spirituality, but good for you if that's meeting some need you feel."

Barely a blip on the radar. In China, being a christian can cost you fines, punishment, and even prison. Especially if you insist on teaching your values to your children. Or should I say child, since you've probably only got one.

In China the cost is very high to be a christian. What's the effect on the church? Well, one way to look at it might be this. IF the rapture happened next week, what percentage of the quote - unquote "christians" would rise in the air to meet the Lord? My guess, for what it's worth is somewhere between 1% and 4% in America's MegaChristianity. In China, on the otherhand, if Jesus shows up in the air and the trumpet sounds, probably 100%.

In our nation, the cost is rising. I believe that perhaps before it's all done, well within my lifetime, christians who insist that the Bible is the inspired word of God, plenary word for word inspiration, literally understood, and without error, the cost to be one of those christians will get tough.

So called religious freedom will be re-defined and quarantined so that sexual freedoms will trump religious freedoms. In other words, christians who will not bow down to dismiss what the Bible clearly teaches about human sexuality will be punished as haters and bigots. Our religious beliefs in the clear words of this book will be defined as discrimination against others sexual claims and rights, and I can see fines, and takings just over the horizon.

That tidal wave may be 5 years out, but perhaps not. When it happens it will

happen quickly. Already, the company I work for is positioning itself to persecute christians. I shared last year the wording of the document regarding my behaviours at work that I openly and loudly protested against.

Nothing happened. I was ignored, as usual. Part of that is the color of my hair. The corporations are hedging that the small noisy percentage will be either separated by retirement or dead. And they're quite right. That rule works in the other arguments as well.

In the mass of christendom, as you poll the age groups, the folks who hold that the Bible is plenary word for word inspired words of God without error and that those words have authority over us, as the age groups get younger, it's just a handful now that believe that. Just wait for the old folks to die out.

In China, Xi Jinping is the messiah. To question his authority and messiahship is deadly. In the USA, the sexual libertarians are the new messiah. And they are throwing their weight against the old norms left over from Western civilization based in this book, daily. The onslaught is continuous. It's a non-stop wave pounding the shores of the old ways defined and codified by this book.

2000 years ago, a man made a similar claim of authority. 2000 years from what? His birth. Perhaps He's important, since the calendar we use still reflects it's day one at His birth. Although we can expect even that to be challenged soon.

*18 And it came about that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the multitudes say that I am?”*

Time has elapsed since the feeding of the 5000. After that event where Jesus disperses His followers with a difficult saying or teaching, and the new threat of Herod who is looking for whoever it is that is causing all the hubbub in Galilee, Jesus and the 12 finally get that time alone together they were craving.

The other synoptic writers, Matthew and Mark tell us that He goes north up into the gentile mostly regions of Tyre and Sidon for a time. Then this time frame that we find ourselves in with Luke this morning is after that journey moving again south, they are probably northeast of the Jordan river near Caesarea Philippi, about 1000 feet elevation in the foothills at the base of Mount Herman.

Luke has different priorities and doesn't stay strictly timeline for his purposes. Luke has taken us systematically through all the different areas that Jesus commands authority over. With His voice He commands the wind and the sea, He commands demons, He commands disease, and He commands death, and they all obey Him.

He looks up to heaven and blesses 5 barley loaves and 2 small fishes, a meal for a small lad, and then feeds 5000 men with women and children. Perhaps over 20,000 are fed.

But what of the multitude that would make Him be king for all the wrong reasons. Food and a good medical plan. Make Israel Great Again. Political reasons. Crush Rome. Put Israel on top of world domination. All of it is political. That's why the world, the multitude, wants Him as king. It's all about their well-being.

When He walked on water, in the storm, to rejoin the disciples in the little boat, and they were fearful, thinking He was a ghost, after He entered the boat with them, the difference between the disciples and the multitudes is evident. The 12 disciples worshipped Him. The multitude does not.

*18 And it came about that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the multitudes say that I am?”*

It turns out, that is the single most important question every created human must answer. The answer to that question separates those who will spend

eternity in bliss with this same Jesus, and those who will be punished for rebellion and war against God, forever, in hell.

Who IS Jesus? It's astonishing if you search that question on the internet how close the devil will let people come to the reality and yet remain safely in his camp. The studies about the "real" Jesus, the simple Jesus, the "red letter" Jesus and on and on ad infinitum.

Every possible Jesus except the one that the disciples bowed down and worshipped in the boat. That leap from authority over every created thing, to the authority over those who recognize who He is and bow down in worship is what Luke wants to talk about.

After 18 months of preaching and working miracles, who do the people, the multitudes say that I am?

*19 And they answered and said, “John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.”*

Safe answers all, for Satan. The answers then were similar to the answers now. Jesus was a great man. The greatest man who ever lived. He was sent by God to be an example of how we should live. He was a prophet. Even Islam says He was a great man and an important prophet. Second only to Mohammed. Right up there in greatness.

Nothing new under the sun. *19 . . . “John the Baptist . . . Elijah; one of the prophets of old has risen again. . .”* All of those would fly on google today. Any answer is allowed by the ruler of this world, except that He is God. He is the authority of God to reign. He will reign. He will depose Satan. He must be worshipped. Satan and Google stop short of the truth. Unfortunately, many who call themselves christians stop short of the truth.

*20 And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.”*

The question is directed at them as a group exclusive of the multitude. Who do ***you*** say that I am? And, as always, Peter is their spokesman. Peter says You are the Messiah. The Christ of God.

If we were in Matthew's gospel in chapter 16 studying this question and answer we would have to speak for a moment about election. Because Jesus explains that the reason they know who He is, is because God has revealed Him to their spirits. They know Him because God has quickened their dead spirits to life.

Which again explains how the multitudes have seen so many miracles and have stopped short of the truth. Their blindness in the blinding light and their deafness is a judgement on Israel pronounced by Isaiah.

Matthew quotes the prophet explaining in chapter 13:15 "*For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*"

The reason for all the wrong answers, all the near misses is judgement. And it's also the reason why Jesus says what He says next;

*21 But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,*

We see this often in the scripture before the cross and the resurrection. When the demons recognize Him and start babbling about Him being the Son of God, He hushes them. When He raises Jairus' daughter from the dead, He tells the parents and the inner circle of disciples, tell no one.

Before the resurrection He tells them don't tell anyone. After the resurrection He tells His disciples, and us by association, you go tell everyone.

Up until now they have been preaching, the Kingdom of God has arrived. The authority to reign of God has come. After the resurrection we preach Christ,

crucified, risen from the dead, All authority to reign is His, He is the King unto whom every knee will bow.

*21 But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,  
22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the  
elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the  
third day.”*

He **is** the Christ of God, but God's plan for His Christ is radically different than what the disciples or the multitude thought.

They were looking for a physical King who would reign over a physical kingdom. Their messiah would crush Rome and restore Israel to greatness. What Jesus says to them is radical. Impossible to believe. *“The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”*

They hear the words but it doesn't make sense. How can Messiah be killed. How does that work. What good is a dead Messiah?

Isaiah 53 foretold it.

*I Who has believed our message?*

*And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

*2For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,  
And like a root out of parched ground;  
He has no stately form or majesty  
That we should look upon Him,  
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.*

*3He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face,  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

*4Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.*

*5But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.*

*6All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him.*

*7He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.*

*8By oppression and judgment He was taken away;  
And as for His generation, who considered  
That He was cut off out of the land of the living,  
For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?*

*9His grave was assigned with wicked men,  
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,  
Because He had done no violence,  
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.*

*10But the LORD was pleased  
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;  
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,  
He will see His offspring,*

*He will prolong His days,  
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.*

*11As a result of the anguish of His soul,  
He will see it and be satisfied;  
By His knowledge the Righteous One,  
My Servant, will justify the many,  
As He will bear their iniquities.*

*12Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,  
And He will divide the booty with the strong;  
Because He poured out Himself to death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors;  
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
And interceded for the transgressors.*

A dead Messiah is necessary because of my sin. And yours. But to these 12 men it doesn't quite register. They hear the words. Their minds don't yet comprehend.

When we're shocked with news that we can't grasp, we set it aside for later. Deal with this later. It can't mean what He just said on the surface. We'll get back to this and figure it out. And that's what we do.

What will we pay to have this Saviour that paid with His blood to have us? What will it cost to come out of Satan's world and transfer our citizenship to His world, His authority.

Salvation is free. We can't pay for our righteousness. He paid it all. But if we come out of this world and move our citizenship, our loves, our very beings into His world what might that cost?

We make that transaction but we don't get to leave this world, physically. We are still here, still citizens, but we've transferred our hearts, our sympathies, our loyalties to somewhere else. What happens then when it's discovered that

we're enemy combatants, we belong to the other side, our sympathies and our loyalties belong to Jesus.

What did we sign up for. Ease? Comfort? Safety? Security? Happiness? That's what the church has been selling in the United States. Is that what this book says?

*23 And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

That's almost as foreign to our ears as the dead Messiah stuff was to theirs. That can't mean what it sounds like it means. Can it?

In America we've enjoyed just the opposite for 250 years. Not only is there no personal cost to follow Jesus, in this land you are honored if you are a christian. It's a higher status here, not a cross. Or at least that was the case until very recent times.

That situation has led to an easy believism here that populates mega churches with people that might vanish if the norms of this book suddenly re-appeared. What norms are those?

The Bible sees the cost of following Jesus more like what we read about in places like Syria. Is having Jesus more important to you than having the blessings of your family? Is having Jesus more important to you than all your worldly possessions? Is having Jesus more important to you than your head, if it comes to that?

If the rules changed in America, who would be left? If loss of property and enormous fines and time in prison became the new rule, who would be left for the next gallup pole.

Those are scary questions. Because we just don't know. In Matt. 10, Jesus says; 34 "*Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.* 35 "*For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS*

*FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; 36 and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.*

We forget that Jesus requires the person who found the buried treasure and the person who found the pearl of great price, in both cases, they were willing to sell everything else in order to have the treasure.

In America for generations, we've sold nothing to have the treasure. We just added Him to all the other treasures. If the choice comes, keep Jesus, or keep your house, your marriage, your children, your family, your retirement, your ease, your comfort, whatever it is that you hold dear, is Jesus the most dear, if we're forced to choose?

*23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

*24 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.*

Is this for real? Does Jesus expect christians to die, in order to have Him? Again, for American christians this sounds like crazy speak. But if you read the history books, christians have died because they were christians in every century since He himself died - for us.

To us it seems bizarre. But it shouldn't. Our situation for 250 years is the bizarre one. It may be ending. Are you ready? In America we have forgotten that we are enemy combatants deep in the middle of enemy territory. If we are doing battle against the ruler of this world we should have been salt in a wound even in America.

It's going to be confusing when it comes. The ones who will take things away from you and punish you will themselves be claiming to be good christians. Christians in name punishing christians who cannot let go of their crazy old book that science and everything sensible has proven to be wrong. Nut case

christians who will suffer loss if they insist on a literal interpretation of the words in this book.

There is a collision to two freight trains going a thousand miles per hour on the same track about to happen. One freight train is this book which has crystal clear teaching about human morality. And the other freight train is the issue of LGBTQ so-called rights.

At the CNN town hall all of the candidates including the ones calling themselves some brand of christian spoke clearly against the immorality and discrimination of the clear words of this Book that cannot be any longer tolerated.

*25 “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?*

In the temptation of Jesus, Satan makes Him an offer. Luke 4: 5 *And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 “Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.”*

Jesus could have had the whole thing, without the cross, if He'd just have bowed down to Satan. Jesus is the only one who was tempted with actually the whole world. All we're tempted with is keeping some broken down junk in the world. *25 “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?*

You can keep your stuff, you can keep this world, if you'll abandon the words of this book. The one thing I am most sure of is this, when all this stuff breaks loose, it's going to be incredibly confusing. Just recant the ancient book, and we'll let you be. You can keep your stuff.

Jesus said; Mt. 24: 24 *For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that*

were possible. 25 See, I have told you in advance....

That's an indicator of how confusing it's going to be for christians when the government comes at us to punish us for what they will call discrimination and bigotry. Ultimately, after we're gone it gets dialed up a big notch for the christians in the tribulation period who must worship the beast, or lose their heads.

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words,

Stop right there. I didn't notice this until this morning. *For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words* His words. I've been thinking this week about the Book. The Bible. He wrote them all. And the battle is going to be over whether the Bible is inspired. Whether the Bible is authoritative over our lives and what we believe. Whether the Bible has errors.

Because all of the stuff that's going to bring the pressure against christians is crystal clear in the Book. So to be a christian in name like Pete Buttigieg, married to a man, if he were elected he has already said he's going to punish intolerant believers who he calls discriminators, you have to dismiss the book somehow. If you discriminate against the rights of people who live in total defiance of the words of this book, you will be punished.

Just this week I was listening to my old hero Al Mohler speaking on this issue and he was saying, it's not a gospel issue if you land short of the book being authoritative in ALL of its words. Plenary inspiration and authority over believers is a secondary issue. That surprised me. I think it's going to become **THE** gospel issue in our land.

*For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*

All you have to do is back away from plenary innerant inspiration, and you can be safe in America. Just admit that all that old stuff about *male and*

*female made He them* is just old timey non scientific slobber written by sheep herders with bad teeth and disproven by modern science and you'll be fine.

Test yourselves. Do you believe all the words of this book, as written? Or are you a little bit ashamed to be associated with people who "go that far" *For whoever is ashamed of Me **and My words**,*

Are you willing to lose houses and land and stuff and freedom if you insist that the words of the Bible trump the laws of this land. The words of this book hold more authority over you than the laws of America?

You may all think I'm crying wolf wolf. I hope we don't have to see what I've warned about this morning, but if we do, it's perfectly normal according to this book. Jesus was clear. He must be first, no matter the cost. We must not be ashamed of the Words, or He will be ashamed of us.

I originally was going to include vs 27 which is a bridge into our next study, but we will pick it up next week in vs. 27 "*But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.*"