

Sermon Text for September 1, 2024

By Guest Minister Rev. Dr. Michael Wilson

Title: Familiarity Breeds....

Text: Psalm 20: 1-5

Mathew 13: 54- 58

Psalm 20^[a]

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹ May the Lord answer you when you are in distress;
may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

² May he send you help from the sanctuary
and grant you support from Zion.

³ May he remember all your sacrifices
and accept your burnt offerings.^[b]

⁴ May he give you the desire of your heart
and make all your plans succeed.

⁵ May we shout for joy over your victory
and lift up our banners in the name of our God.

May the Lord grant all your requests.

Matthew 13: 54-58

⁵⁴ Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. ⁵⁵ "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home."

⁵⁸ And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Announcements:

Our pastor, Pastor Bob is in Iceland with family – visiting his daughter who is working there. I'm grateful to be here. I know that many of you know me – but I don't assume that everyone does. If we haven't met, I am Michael Wilson. I serve you and the other 50ish congregations of Donegal Presbytery as your Stated Clerk. This is my home congregation. My wife is a member here – and she is actually in charge of coffee time this morning – Thanks, Tricia? Do we need more sign ups?

By the way, since I had a small hand in this – grapes, and doughnuts from Beiler's Doughnuts, including just a few of their famous Bacon Maple! I love them.

Delighted to introduce to you Jennifer Eisenberg, who will be serving as our Seminary Intern for the next 9 months. Jen and her husband, Jon, worship with here regularly, so you might recognized them, and Jen led us in Bible Study at our Inaugural Church Retreat this past February, so you might remember her from that!

Everybody has opinions about others. Right – we have opinions about our kids’ teachers, our parents – sometimes those opinions follow us far into adulthood, our kids – whether they are 2 or 10 or 40. Some of you have an opinion about Rob Thomson “Topper,” and how he is managing the Phillies this year. You might have an opinion about Jalen Hurts or whether or not Jason Kelce should have retired. I’ll be you have an opinion about Taylor Swift. Truthfully – many of those opinions matter very little in terms of how we shape our own lives. But your opinion of Jesus? Here is something life-defining. What we think of Jesus shapes our attitude towards life itself, our choices about money and vocation, where we live, how we raise your kids, how we treat our parents. Here is an opinion you want to be very clear about.

Will you pray with me?

Familiarity breeds... (finish the sentence..)

What else might familiarity breed...

Some of you have been married a long time!

Some of you have been alive a long time!

Some of you have lived around here for – a long time.

Appreciation, affection, a sense of realism

And, of course, some of us have been part of “church” and maybe even part of this church – for a long time. Not everyone. We’ve got people here – new to Christian faith, new to this church – maybe you have just committed your life to Jesus Christ or recommitted your life to Jesus Christ. There is a word here for you, I think.

And there is a particular word here for long-timers.

We are in the 13th chapter of Matthew – at the end of chapter 13. Honestly, we are about half-done with Matthew. Think with me about what we have seen and experienced –

Jesus has been born. We've learned his lineage – his parents and grandparents. He has grown up. He has been baptized and tested in the wilderness. Jesus has started preaching and gathered disciples. He has uttered the remarkable words of the Sermon on the Mount – words that have shaped human history. Thomas Jefferson – in whose opinion Jesus was only human – thought these words the best ethics in the world.

And then Jesus started healing – a man with leprosy, a centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, a woman who had been bleeding for over a decade. He has calmed a storm and claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath. He has told parables and now – he has come home.

And when he arrives home, they ask this question – “Where does this man get all of this wisdom and these deeds of power?”

What a question! There have been parables about mustard seeds and weeds and tares. What we now call the Lord's Prayer has entered human history. Jesus has given them – and us - the injunction to love our enemies, the teaching about anxiety and the words “Do not worry about tomorrow – each day has enough trouble of its own.” Where does that kind of wisdom come from? As an aside – I sometimes talk to people who are into the wisdom from the east. They are meditating and they say to me – Jesus is so task oriented – go, go go. And I think – have you read these words of wisdom, seen Jesus withdraw to the mountainside. Christians were contemplating and meditating long before Americans discovered Buddhism. These people from Jesus' hometown have heard that Jesus has calmed a storm and declared that a young woman everyone thought was dead was really only sleeping – and she got up.

And so they remember Jesus running around their streets and climbing on their roofs. Handing out with their sons. They remember scraped knees and perhaps a fight or two!

And so they say – where did this come from? I remember him before his voice dropped and when he didn't know a chisel from a hammer.

Well – where did Jesus get these deeds of power? Where did this wisdom come from. It is as if the whole arc of Matthew has come to this question – a question from these people and for our souls.

What do you think? Where did Jesus get these deeds of power? Where did this wisdom come from?

You know, when you come home. When you come back – you discover the deep opinions. The ones that have been around for a long time.

I want to ask you a question – we’re going to take a “show of hands vote.” You don’t have to participate.

Are you from around here?

Are you not from around here?

It’s one or the other. I know that it can seem more complicated than that. If someone were to ask me, I’d say, “Well, I’ve lived here since 2001. Raised me kids here...” In this scenario – the answer is no.

Around here?

Not around here?

Second questions -

How long have you lived in Lancaster County? What part of your life – 100%, 75%, 50%, 25%, 10% Need to do a little math....

Here is what happens to Jesus, who comes back to a place where he “is from around here.” And where he has lived “in these parts” for 100% of his life....

They took offense at him.

And he says – a prophet is not with honor, except in his hometown.

And then – he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their lack of faith.

Interesting – it doesn’t say that faith = deeds of power. It does say that with it – they (we?) can’t see them, experience them, maybe even ask for them. It’s not a formula where we get what we want. But it is a doorway through which we can’t even go if we don’t have faith.

So – if you have been around church a long time – or if this is your first time here – let me ask you a question –

What is your opinion of Jesus? What has familiarity done for you? Or – if your opinion is unformed – how will you make it?

Asked AI – Perplexity – Is Jesus Christ the Son of God?

Based on the search results provided, there are different perspectives on whether Jesus Christ is the Son of God:

- 1. The Christian perspective generally affirms that Jesus is both the Son of God and God incarnate:*
 - Jesus claimed to have a unique relationship with God the Father, referring to himself as the Son of God.*
 - The Bible contains several instances where Jesus is called the Son of God, including by supernatural beings and his disciples.*
 - Christians interpret "Son of God" to mean Jesus possesses the same divine nature as God the Father, while being a distinct person within the Trinity.*
- 2. Key points supporting this view include:*
 - Jesus' virgin birth through the Holy Spirit qualifies him as the Son of God in a unique way.*
 - New Testament passages describe Jesus as the "exact representation" of God's being.*
 - Jesus is seen as God's first and only direct creation, making him the foremost Son of God.*
- 3. However, some alternative interpretations exist:*
 - The term "Son of God" was used metaphorically in Jewish tradition to refer to righteous individuals or those with a divine mandate, not necessarily implying divinity.*

- *Jesus may have used the term sparingly for himself, preferring other titles like "son of man".*
4. *Muslims and some others propose non-divine interpretations of Jesus' sonship that align with monotheism and Jesus' own statements about God.*

In conclusion, mainstream Christian theology affirms Jesus as the divine Son of God, while recognizing this is a complex theological concept. Other perspectives interpret the "Son of God" title more metaphorically or as an honorary term not implying divinity. The issue remains a point of theological debate among different faith traditions.

Sources –

Bible study tools, reddit, gotquestions.org, jw.org, reviewof religions, Wikipedia, churchofjesuschrist, goingfarther

Thoughts on this –

- 1) I asked AI a yes/no question – it didn't answer it directly – someone programs AI – so - Do your own work
- 2) Get your info about Jesus from the Bible
- 3) This answer matters – in life, in death – so do you own work now
- 4) Make an opinion

CS Lewis;

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at

him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

A couple of ways to approach Jesus –

- 1) He’s new and I need to get to know him...
- 2) I’ve got some assumptions and he seems normal - Hard to do when you’ve been listening about him all your life – where is the awe?
- 3) I live in amazement

Then apparently – we are in the presence of deeds of power and wisdom – and don’t we – don’t you – need that?