

Saviour:
Saviour in His Life
Matthew 16:13-19

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Text Introduction: Easter is on Sunday, April 16, this year. (Who are you going to invite?) On the Thursday and Friday of Holy Week, our Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra along with **Ballet Magnificat** will present a musical oratorio titled, *Saviour*. **Ballet Magnificat** is a professional Christian ballet company that has been described as the premiere Christian dance company in the United States. Their professional touring companies have performed both nationally and internationally. (Again, who are you going to invite?)

I have been listening to this music in preparation for preaching now through Easter. It is stirring and worshipful. This work is about God's passion for His people. The story, which takes us from creation through resurrection, is a picture of God pursuing His people. I so hope you come. It is going to be a wonderful experience.

To prepare us for own reflection and celebration of Easter, I am exploring the same theme of **Saviour** for our preaching times as we approach Easter.

His passionate pursuit of us that calls us to relationship started at creation, and we continue to see it in the fall. We see this continued rebellion throughout the Old Testament as the story of Israel as a nation unfolds. The prophets of the Old Testament begin to point toward the Messiah coming—a Saviour. Most people heard this prophecy of a Saviour as a political savior rather than a spiritual Saviour. They missed that His purpose in coming was to be the One who would come to take away our greatest problem of all—our sin.

Last week, we examined the subject of **Saviour** through the birth of Jesus. I wanted us to see again that the expressed reason for His coming was to be our Saviour. We noted that this is evident in His nativity, His nature, and even His name!

Today, I want to address with you the idea that His life communicates that He has come to be Saviour. To start, we read one of the most important passages of the Bible.

Text: When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ “But you,” He asked them, “who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!”

¹⁷ And Jesus responded, “Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven.¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven.”

Introduction: Our text today is an important one. This particular scene from Jesus’ life comes at a pivotal moment in Matthew’s narrative of the life of Jesus. Rather than give exposition on these verses today, I want to review the life of Jesus. I want to review with you what leads Peter to make this confession.

At the heart of our review today is the question, “What about Jesus persuaded Peter and others to follow Him?” The answer to that question prepared them and prepares us to examine the evidence at the cross and resurrection.

Recognizing Jesus As Saviour

About His life, Matthew built his argument around three ideas.

Jesus, the Man

Matthew begins his gospel with narrative of Jesus’ birth, baptism, temptation, and the beginning of His ministry. In the telling of these events we see that Jesus is no ordinary man in . . .

1. His Birth—Jesus is born of a virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit, worshipped by magi, and miraculously protected from the edict of Herod, which sought to slaughter all male children born in Bethlehem. All of these events in Jesus’ early life enabled some Jews to see in Him the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
2. His Baptism—Jesus’ baptism at the hands of John in chapter 3 is accompanied with the miraculous opening of the heavens, the spirit of God descending, and the audible voice pronouncing Jesus to be no ordinary man.

“This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him.”

3. His Beginning of Ministry—In the temptation episode, the calling of the first disciples, and the evidence of Jesus’ miracles recorded in chapter 4, Matthew continued to indicate that this was no ordinary man.

Jesus and His Message

Matthew provided the most extended account of the teachings of Jesus. The most concise one place in all the Gospels for the message of Jesus is in Matthew 5-7. We call this section the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus began with what have come to be called “The Beatitudes.” Then, He briefly described the mission of His followers in the world—to be salt and light. Next, Jesus discussed His relationship to the Law summarizing that He had not come to destroy or do away with the Law, but rather to fulfill the Law. He listed several examples of how this was true. Next, he noted a list of items that we should always be careful to do or not to do. He ended with a story—a powerful story of a wise and foolish man who encountered a flood. The wise man’s house stood, while the foolish man’s house collapsed. What was

the result of such powerful teaching? “When Jesus had finished this sermon, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, because He was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes.” (Matthew 7:28-29)

Beyond Matthew 7, Matthew recorded summaries of Jesus’ teaching and the stories of Jesus’ teachings. We know those stories by the word parable. In chapter 14, we get the story of 5,000 men and their families following Jesus in order to hear His teaching.

All of this to say that Jesus’ message drew people to examine His life. Truly, He taught as One having authority.

Jesus and His Ministry

Then, Matthew used the miracles of Jesus to tell the story.

Matthew spent much detail on the miracles of Jesus with interludes of reactions to those miracles. Just in Matthew 8-9, we get...

- Healings—Specific miracles as in Leper (8:1-4), Centurion’s Son (8:5-13), Peter’s Mother-in-law (8:14-15), Summary of many healings (8:16-17), Paralytic (9:1-8), Daughter of Synagogue Official (9:18-19, 23-26), Woman with hemorrhage for 12 years (9:20-22), 2 blind men (9:27-31), Mute demon-possessed man (9:32-34); Summary of healings (9:35)
- Casting out of Demons—Summary of many Exorcisms (8:16), In the country of Gadarenes (8:28-34), Mute (9:32-34)
- Other—Calming of the Sea (8:23-26)

So, in sum, the man Jesus, along with the messages of Jesus and the miracles of Jesus point to His being Saviour.

Responses to Jesus

Some believe; some do not. Always been this way; always will be.

One of the more notable negative responses are the rejections of entire groups. Woe is pronounced by Jesus to the cities of Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. (11:20-24) Certainly most disheartening for Jesus is the response of his own hometown. (12:53-58) In addition to these two accounts, I draw your attention back to the example of the city where Jesus healed the demoniac. (8:34) Astonishingly, rather than welcome the ministry of Jesus to their town, they “pleaded with him to leave their region.” Such is the case in many hearts today. Rather than gladly accept Jesus, some turn Him away in disbelief.

Why do some find it hard to follow Jesus?

Following Jesus is hard for some for a variety of reasons. Matthew 8-14 reveals some of these reasons.

1. The Cost of Following Jesus—As Jesus began to call disciples he pulled no punches. He revealed the cost of following Him. The cost of following Jesus is explained in the following passages:
 - 8:18-22
 - 10:5-39

The cost is one of personal sacrifice and complete surrender. In that many of us struggle with pride and selfishness, the life that Christ calls us to is often difficult, leaving many to reject the claims of Christ on their life.

2. The Outside Challenges of Following Jesus—The parable of Jesus in chapter 13 indicates that forces from the outside cause many to not follow Jesus. Satan uses every available tactic to keep prospective followers of Jesus from surrendering completely to Him.
3. The Logical Challenges of Following Jesus—Like the people in Jesus' hometown, many reject Christ because of their own logic. They conclude that salvation through Christ is too easy. Or perhaps, they conclude that Jesus cannot logically be God. Unfortunately this barrier of human wisdom and logic keeps some from believing in Jesus. While Christ would not have us to check our intellect at the door, belief in Jesus is not possible without faith. This leads us back to Peter and an episode recorded in Matthew 14.

Requirement to Follow Jesus

The example of Peter walking on the water reveals the basic necessity of following Jesus—*faith*. Initially Peter had the faith that he could walk on the water. Indeed, he succeeded as long as his faith was in Jesus. When he looked down, he sank. However, out of this experience, Peter is going to come to have real, lasting faith in Jesus. This kind of faith in Jesus gives us the extraordinary statement that we read in Matthew 16.

Reward of Following Jesus

Matthew indicated a paradox in following Jesus. On one hand, following Jesus is a challenge. On the other hand, following Jesus is an easy road. Read the words of Matthew 11:28-30 slowly and let them apply to every single struggle that you may be facing.

Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.²⁹ All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves.³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Though the requirements of discipleship are costly, remember that the sacrifice that Christ made for your salvation was costly. Remember too that your road is easy because He took the difficult road to the cross.