

Luke 9:18-24

Our text for today contains the **words** of what is perhaps the world's most **famous** confession of faith. But a confession of faith is not **only** made up of **words**, it is also made up of **actions**. Jesus wants to **hear** our confession of faith in Him, but He also expects to **see** that confession of faith - as we live our lives as **Christians**, and confess our faith through our **actions**. Sunday after Sunday we confess our faith in Jesus through the **words** of the Universal Creeds. On communion Sundays we unite in the **Nicene** Creed, while on non-communion Sundays we confess the **Apostles'** Creed. Both creeds make a concise and basic statement of our faith in Jesus. Day after day we **also** confess our faith in Him through our **actions** - as we provide comforting and consoling messages to those who are experiencing frustration and difficulty in their lives. This morning, as we look at **Peter's** confession of faith, let us consider **The Kind Of Confession Jesus Expects**.

There can be no doubt that Jesus **expects** His disciples to confess Him with **words**. As we see from our text, this was already true of His chosen twelve. Jesus' public ministry had come to a crucial point in time. His sufferings and death were drawing nearer, and there were still very **few** who realized that Jesus was the **Messiah** - the Son of God. Even after experiencing His miracles, like the feeding of the 5,000, many people went **away** and no longer **followed** Jesus. But, His chosen twelve were just beginning to **develop** into the kind of **followers** who would soon become **leaders**!

The twelve were beginning to experience the tremendous **thrill** of carrying out God's work here on the earth. They had just returned from their first **independent** mission - that is, without Jesus **physically** going along **with** them. Jesus had sent His disciples out with **His** power and authority - to **preach** the Gospel of the kingdom, to **heal** the sick, and to **drive out** demons. Their mission met with great **success**, and the twelve returned with a stronger **faith**, and an even **deeper** conviction that Jesus was truly the long-awaited Son of God.

However, that conviction was not **shared** by **everyone**. Jesus asked His disciples, "*Who do the **crowds** say I am?*" The replies were quite **varied**, "*Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.*" All of these people recognized Jesus as someone **important** - someone of religious **significance** - yet, **none** of them were saying that He was God's **Son**. Of course, Jesus already **knew** what others **were** or were **not** saying about Him. He had asked the question merely as a lead-in for His **next** question. "*But what about **you**? Who do **you** say I am?*" Perhaps the crowds really

believed that Jesus was the Son of God; but if they **did**, they weren't **saying** so. Jesus wanted to **hear** such a confession from His chosen twelve - and He **did**. Peter, speaking as usual for the entire group, said, "*(You are) the **Christ of God.***"

There is tremendous **significance** in the words which Peter chose for his confession of faith. In referring to Jesus as the **Christ**, or in Hebrew the **Messiah**, he was showing that he truly understood Jesus' mission and purpose. The word **Christ** means the **Anointed One**. Being God's **Anointed One** meant that Jesus had been chosen, set aside, and equipped for the special purpose of being our **Savior**, in much the same way as the prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament had been specially designated for **their** jobs by being anointed.

All of the disciples were in **agreement** with Peter's confession. Because they had been so **closely** associated with Jesus, the twelve disciples **knew** that He was the Christ of God - and equally as important, they weren't afraid to **say** so. But what about **you**? Who do **you** say that Jesus is? Jesus also wants to hear **our** confession of faith in Him. And He **does**. As I mentioned earlier, He hears that confession in the words of our familiar **creeds** - but He **also** hears it in the words of our daily private **prayers**, as we turn to Him for help and guidance - He hears it in the words of our family **devotions** - and He hears our confession of faith in the words of the **hymns, prayers, Scripture readings, sermon**, and indeed **every** part of our weekly **worship services**.

Jesus always **responds** to a confession of faith. He responded to His **disciples** by telling them in plain and unmistakable words that He would **suffer, die, and rise** again. Jesus said, "*The Son of Man must **suffer** many things and be **rejected** by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and He must be **killed**, and on the third day be **raised to life.***" This was certainly a **shock** to the disciples. It was a statement that would change their lives. Instead of striving to be among the **ruling** class here on the **earth**, the disciples would be striving to be humble **servants** of Jesus in **heaven**.

The events of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection have also changed **our** lives, so that we move from merely **speaking** a confession of faith, to also **living** a confession of faith. But **What Kind Of Confession Does Jesus Expect** in our actions, as we live for **Him**, and not for ourselves? For the disciples, living as Christians meant many **sacrifices**. Jesus told them, "***This is what I expect.** 'If anyone would come after Me, he must **deny himself**, take up his cross **daily**, and **follow Me.***'" Notice that Jesus isn't giving His disciples any **options** here. Jesus didn't say there **may** be sacrifices which need to be made - He said there **must** be

sacrifices. For the disciples, three things **had** to be done. First of all, they would have to **deny themselves**. They would have to give up their **careers** as fishermen, tax collectors, and whatever else they had **previously** done for a living - and they would go where **Jesus** wanted them to go, and do what **Jesus** wanted them to do. Secondly, the disciples would have to take up their **crosses**. Many persecutions and hardships would come to them just because they chose to be **different** - because they chose to be **with** Jesus, and to be **like** Jesus. And finally, the disciples would have to lose their **lives** for Christ. **Their** lives would become **nothing**, so that **Christ** would become **everything** to them. All but **one** of the disciples, John, actually lost their **physical** lives for the sake of Jesus, and died as **martyrs**. And in reality, even **John** gave up the 100 years of his physical life by living them in full-time **service** to the Lord Jesus. Yet, in giving up those physical lives, the disciples had really lost very **little**, because in the **end**, they would receive **eternal life** through Christ.

Being a follower of Jesus still means **sacrifice** today. It means denying **ourselves**, and letting **God** take charge of our lives. It means taking up our **crosses** and bearing the **burdens** which God uses to make us **mature** and **well-seasoned** Christians. And, it means **continuing** to follow Jesus, not just **starting out** with Him and then **drifting away**. Perhaps that's the **hardest** part, because virtually **everything** in this life seems to get in the **way** - to **hinder** us from following Jesus. Perhaps our father or mother, spouse or children will say or do something which will unwittingly serve as a **test** for our faith. Maybe our **employer** will give us an ultimatum which will make us consider whether our loyalties lie with our **Savior**, or with some earthly **company**. Or perhaps the questions and doubts will come from **within** us - products of our own sinful **nature** - thoughts which have been fostered and nurtured by the sinful **world**, and even by **Satan** himself. At any rate, if we stand **firm** - if we remain **true** - if we follow Christ **regardless** of the cost - then in reality we will have lost very **little** in the end, because following **Jesus** results in **eternal life** in heaven.

My dear friends, may God move our hearts and hands and voices to **continually** follow **Christ** above **all** others, and may He enable us to make **The Kind Of Confession Jesus Expects** - a confession not only in **words**, but also in **actions**. Amen.