Hello! The title of my message today is **“You Are The Christ”** from Matthew 16:13-23 (you might use the 2011 NIV bible that says “You Are The Messiah”) but for today I’ll be using the 1984 NIV version that uses the word “the Christ”. It is my hope that from this message we will get a better understanding of who Jesus is, why He had to die on the cross and what it means to receive Jesus as our personal Saviour. (pray). The key verse for my message is verse 16 (read together from screen):  
  
**“Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**

Let’s start by looking at verse 13-14 **“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?". They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."** Caesarea Philippi was a beautiful town located 15 miles north from the Sea of Galilee. It was known for its rolling foothills and natural springs which offered Jesus and the disciples a quiet place to enjoy a spiritual retreat (kinda like you being here at this SBC). It was during this brief getaway that Jesus asked His disciples two important questions about His identity. The theme of our conference is about our identity in Christ, but from this passage we will learn about the identity of Jesus Christ. The first question He asked the disciples was a public survey, **"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"** At this point in Jesus' ministry, His disciples had been eating with Jesus, living with Jesus and watching Him perform miracles for about two years. During that time, people had many things to say about who Jesus was. Some people said Jesus was John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a prophet of God, and many people thought that he was the Messiah. But John himself said **“I am not the Christ but I am sent to prepare the way of the Lord”** Next, some people believed that Jesus was Elijah. Elijah was an Old Testament prophet that God used to defeat 850 idol worship prophets on Mount Carmel. And some people even thought that Jesus was Jeremiah. Jeremiah was known as “the weeping prophet,” who cried many tears knowing that his people would be exiled to Babylon.

From these answers, we can see that Jesus was well-respected and most people during His time on earth had flattering things to say about Him. But the problem is all these answers were wrong. Now, this is what people thought about Jesus 2,000 years ago. **But what about today? What are people’s opinions about Jesus, in 2024?** Well, I asked them. Last week, I went downtown Toronto (UofT campus, Spadina/Bloor) and I walked up to random people and asked **“Who is Jesus Christ to you, and what was His life like?”** I spoke to 35 people and here are some of their answers:

* Jesus was a prophet (guy)
* Jesus was a spiritual leader and a good teacher
* Jesus is my personal Saviour (Christian woman)
* Jesus was a guy that lived 2,000 years ago (UofT student)
* Jesus is a rebel (older lady)

This small public survey indicates that most people don’t really know exactly who Jesus is…and this is a big problem. People today need to know the true identity of Jesus Christ, because eternal salvation can only be received through knowing Jesus as our personal Saviour.

Now, the next question Jesus asked the disciples was personal. Look at verse 15 **“But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"** This question was regarding their personal conviction. The disciples could not hide behind the opinions of other people, but they had to take a personal stance with their own opinion.This was like a midterm exam that Jesus was using to test His disciples, and getting this answer right wasn’t about earning an “A” or a “B” or getting into law school, this was about eternal life. Look at John 17:3 (read together) “**Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent”.** It’s only through knowing Jesus, that we have eternal life.

Next, Peter answered on behalf of the disciples. Look at verse 16 **“"Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'"** The word “Christ” is a Greek word that means “Anointed One”. In the Old Testament, when someone was given a position to fulfill God’s calling and mission, oil was poured on his head. This anointing was given to kings, priests and prophets as a symbolic act to indicate God’s approval of them. However, “the Christ” would be the Kings of kings, he would be a great high priest. Christ would also be the greatest prophet of God. This Biblical truth, known as the “3 offices of Jesus” was later used by the 16th century theologian John Calvin during the Protestant Reformation.

In order to understand who Christ was and what He did, we need to start with the Old Testament, which contains prophecies concerning the coming of Christ. For example, Genesis 3:15 describes him as God’s promised ‘Deliverer’. The woman’s offspring would crush Satan’s head. And this woman’s offspring is the Messiah. Isaiah 53 says that he would be a suffering servant who would undergo death to atone for our sins and then have victory over death. John 1:29 describes him as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. In this way, he is our Saviour. Luke 2:11 says **“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”** Jesus Christ is our Saviour and Lord. Amen!

From Peter’s confession, he also called Jesus **“the Son of the living God.”** Jesus is “God’s Son” means that God came down to earth in human form. Isaiah 9:6 describes the divine nature of Jesus: “Wonderful Counselor” means we can trust Him to listen to our problems and guide us in the right direction. “Mighty God'' Jesus will judge all the people of the earth and then sit on His eternal throne and reign in great power and authority. Jesus will be our “Everlasting Father” and His fatherhood will last forever. “Prince of Peace”, no matter what hardships we might face in life, we can ask for a peace that comes from the powerful love of God. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus is the radiance and the exact representation of God. So even though we have never seen God the Father, we see Him through the “brightness” of His Son Jesus. And 1 Timothy 2:5 describes Jesus as the only mediator between God and man. This means Jesus Christ is the only way to God the Father. Our good works won’t make us right with God. Having faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord is the only bridge between a sinful world and a Holy God. Thank and praise Jesus!

Now, since the disciples had been following Jesus very closely throughout His ministry, it should have been very obvious to them that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God. Then, if it were obvious…why did Jesus ask them this question? The reason is because it’s important to make a personal confession of faith in Jesus.

Romans 10:9 says **“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved”** To confess means to testify and speak the truth regarding a matter. It’s those rare moments in someone's life when they’re completely honest, unfiltered and unashamed about their true feelings.

For example, some of you attended the recent wedding between Ruth and Charles Kim Jr. During that very beautiful (and very rainy day), we heard them confess their love to each other. Or sometimes when I talk with my daughter Abigail on Whatsapp, she usually ends the call saying “Dadda, I love you”. What we confess with our mouth to other people, reveals what’s truly in our heart. When Peter made his confession, he was very confident that Jesus was God. To Peter, Jesus was not just a prophet, or just another way to God, but Jesus is God. Peter’s confession was basically a life commitment to Jesus. This is the confession that Jesus wanted from Peter and the disciples.

This question, **"Who do you say I am?"** is something Jesus asks each one of us. He desires from us an honest response based on our faith. Even though we haven’t met Jesus face to face like Peter did, we can still meet Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit as we study God's word and have deep fellowship with other followers of Christ. When we experience the saving grace of Jesus, it causes us to testify boldly like Peter. We must confess, **"Jesus, you are the Christ, my Savior, and the Son of God."** This confession is the foundation for our Bible study, our Sunday worship service and our campus ministry. So, who do you say Jesus is?

Let’s look at how Jesus responded to Peter’s confession. Verse 17 says **“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”** This shows that Peter’s insight came from God, not from human wisdom. Jesus confirmed that Peter’s understanding was a divine revelation, not something he figured out on his own. This shows us that recognizing Jesus as Christ comes from the Holy Spirit, and not from our own effort.

So far, we’ve learned about Peter’s confession. Now let us see how Jesus helps the disciples in the next stage of discipleship. Verse 21 says **“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”** This is the way of the Christ. There was no other way because Jesus had to pay the full price for our sins. Also notice how verse 21 says “From that time on…”, which implies that this was the first time that Jesus told His disciples about His upcoming death. This was like a new semester for the disciples. They had passed their midterm exam, and now it was time for a new level of teaching. The disciples would learn that Jesus is the Christ through His suffering, death and resurrection.

Now, the thought of death and suffering can be a hard topic to talk about, but redeeming us from our sins demands a blood sacrifice. In Leviticus 16, Aaron had to shed blood for himself and the Israelites. This shows that shedding blood is necessary because, without it, there is no forgiveness of our sins. Without the crucifixion, we can’t be saved. No suffering, no salvation. No pain, no gain. In verse 22, we see that Peter didn’t understand the suffering Jesus had to go through. Peter said **"Never, Lord! This won't happen to you!"** Jesus responded in verse 23 by rebuking Peter, **"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men”.** Peter didn't realize his thoughts were influenced by Satan. He thought he knew best, but he was wrong. Later in life, Peter wrote letters about humility, stressing the importance of seeking God's wisdom and not letting pride make us think we always know best.  
  
As I thought about this passage and prepared to share this message, old memories came back to an important moment in my life. It was spring 2013. I remember being on my knees, crying out to God. At that time, I was living a life of sexual sin, feeling hopeless and alone. Turning to God, I sought help through prayer. That moment marked the start of my spiritual journey. Eventually, I made a personal confession to Christ and became a follower of Jesus. Before that, I treated God like a spiritual ATM. If I had a money problem, I’d pray to God. If I had a health problem, I’d pray to God. If I had a girlfriend problem, I’d pray to God. But I had no personal relationship with Jesus; I just saw Him as a problem solver. But when I sincerely repented, God led me to UBF in fall 2014. Through Bible study and God’s work in my heart, I began to change, even though Satan tried to pull me back to my old life of sin. Before the 2015 UBF Canadian SBC,I received a text message from one of my ex-girlfriends asking me to join her on a summer vacation to Europe. She even offered to pay for my plane ticket. So I had a decision to make…follow my ex-girlfriend and my lustful desires or deny myself and follow Jesus. Thankfully, I chose Jesus.

Since then, nearly 10 years ago, following Jesus has transformed my life. God blessed me with a wonderful wife, Jemmie, and two beautiful children, Abigail and Andrew. He’s also used me to teach the Bible to U of T students and many young people. However, what’s most important is that my life purpose has changed. I once dreamed of being a famous Hollywood film director (Steven Spielberg, James Cameroon, Ian Agard) but now I just want to live a simple life that brings glory to God.

You know…when God chooses someone to be a messenger of His word, it can be very easy to look back to see how Jesus has led me through life, up to this point. But as I was writing this message and rewriting and rewriting, I had a hard time finding the words to describe…**“Who is Jesus to me now?” “Who is Jesus to me regarding my future?”** But I learned that this struggle was not just about writing a message (it was more than that), it was also an opportunity to renew my personal confession to Jesus - **Jesus, you are the Christ. My Saviour and my Lord.**

Now, before I wrap up my message, I have one final question (ask the audience):

***“What about you? Who do you say Jesus is?”***

I pray that we never lose sight of the profound truth revealed in Peter's confession (everyone): **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God**. *Let’s pray.*