



2026. 2.

Small Group Preview

Jesus community where
God's kingdom is realized on this earth

2026. 2. 1. Bothell Main Campus 2pm



시애틀형제교회
COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SEATTLE

What is the calling for February?

This year began with the slogan “Live Your Calling.” God has given us many callings. Among them, the most important calling is that God has called all of us to be His children. God the Father has called and sought each and every one of us as His children. By paying the life of His most beloved Son, Jesus Christ, God called us to be His children. Keep in your heart the fact that He has called us to be His precious children, and confidently proclaim that you are God’s precious child. The identity that I am God’s precious child will help me move forward into my calling not with fear, but with boldness.

The calling in our lives is not just one, but many. God not only called us as His precious children, but He has also given us other callings. God has called us to our families, He has called us to our church, and He has called us to small group communities. As we begin February, seek with a prayerful heart what God’s calling toward you is. And as a precious child of the King, begin the things that please God. God will open the way before you and will accomplish His good will. As these everyday callings are fulfilled, the kingdom of God will be concretely realized among us.

In order to fulfill God’s calling in our daily lives, this year our community will carry out “30 Days of Workship” as the theme for the community 30 days. The word “Workship” is an intentionally created compound word. That is, it connects worship offered on Sunday (Worship) with work (Work). On March 27 and 28, we will also hold a conference with this theme. Through all of these processes, we hope that the stories and testimonies of those who have concretely realized God’s calling and the kingdom of God in the field of life will abound richly in the lives of our church. We expect that in the new year as well, God will accomplish even better things than this for our community.

A servant of Christ, **James Kwon**



Embracing the members with a shepherd's heart

Small Group Preview

Small Group Usage

Living Life Weekly Bible Study 2, February 12th Scripture, P166

Focus

If we listen well to God's Word and obey it, we can live a life that bears fruit.

Ice Breakers

Missionary William Carey obeyed the command, "Make disciples of all nations," and fully translated the Bible into six languages, pioneering the path of missions in India. If you have an experience of hearing God's Word, obeying it, and bearing fruit, share it.

Examine God's Word

Read Matthew 13:1–17 together. Circle or underline words or expressions that are repeated or that carry important meaning.

Understand Setting

In the first century, Jesus taught about the kingdom of God through a parable about a sower and soils that people were familiar with. Although this parable is known as "the Parable of the Sower," the core of the message Jesus intended to convey is the soils where the seed was sown. In Old Testament history, the land also came to mean the heart of a person who receives God's Word. For example, Old Testament prophets compared the hearts of Israel, who disobeyed God's Word, to "hardened hearts." The prophet Ezekiel also foretold that God would give a soft heart (Ezekiel 36:26). In today's passage as well, Jesus speaks by comparing the "heart that receives God's Word" or the "response to the gospel" to four kinds of soil. Through this Word, we also examine our own hearts as we receive God's Word before Him.

Meditate the Text

1 **Observation** As Jesus tells the crowd the parable of the sower, what are the four kinds of soil He mentions? (verses 4–8)

2 **Observation** Why does Jesus speak the secrets of the kingdom of heaven in parables? (verses 11, 13)

3 **Application** When I hear or read the Word, what are the reasons I am unable to keep it for a long time? Share how we can bear fruit like good soil.

Review the Text

Jesus spoke the parable of the sower to His disciples. The sower represents Jesus, and the four kinds of soil refer to the attitudes of those who receive the Word. The seeds that fell on the path, on rocky ground, and among thorns did not bear fruit. However, the seed that fell on good soil produced a harvest—thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. Today, we must receive God’s Word with joy, lay down greed and anxiety, and hold firmly to the Word to the end. When we do so, God will, by His grace, cause us to reap an abundant harvest.

Pray through the Text

- 1 Grant us hearts that long for Your Word, and help us lay down excessive anxiety.
- 2 As we hold fast to Your Word and walk in perseverance and obedience, grant us abundant fruit.



Small Group Preview

Leader Usage

Living Life Weekly Bible Study 2, February 12th Scripture, P166

Focus

If we listen well to God's Word and obey it, we can live a life that bears fruit.

Ice Breakers

Missionary William Carey obeyed the command, "Make disciples of all nations," and fully translated the Bible into six languages, pioneering the path of missions in India. If you have an experience of hearing God's Word, obeying it, and bearing fruit, share it.

Examine God's Word

Read Matthew 13:1-17 together. Circle or underline words or expressions that are repeated or that carry important meaning.

NIV	GOD'S WORD	ESV
<p>1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.</p> <p>2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.</p> <p>3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed.</p> <p>4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.</p> <p>5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.</p> <p>6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.</p> <p>7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.</p> <p>8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.</p> <p>9 Whoever has ears, let them hear."</p>	<p>1 That same day Jesus left the house and sat down by the Sea of Galilee.</p> <p>2 The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat. He sat in the boat while the entire crowd stood on the shore.</p> <p>3 Then he used stories as illustrations to tell them many things. He said, "Listen! A farmer went to plant seed.</p> <p>4 Some seeds were planted along the road, and birds came and devoured them.</p> <p>5 Other seeds were planted on rocky ground, where there was little soil. The plants sprouted quickly because the soil wasn't deep.</p> <p>6 But when the sun came up, they were scorched. They withered because their roots weren't deep enough.</p> <p>7 Other seeds were planted among thornbushes, and the thornbushes grew up and choked them.</p> <p>8 But other seeds were planted on good ground and produced grain. They produced one hundred, sixty, or thirty times as much as was planted.</p> <p>9 Let the person who has ears listen!"</p>	<p>1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.</p> <p>2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach.</p> <p>3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow.</p> <p>4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.</p> <p>5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil,</p> <p>6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.</p> <p>7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.</p> <p>8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.</p> <p>9 He who has ears,[a] let him hear."</p>

10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

11 He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

13 This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. [a]

16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

17 For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

10 The disciples asked him, "Why do you use stories as illustrations when you speak to people?"

11 Jesus answered, "Knowledge about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you. But it has not been given to the crowd.

12 Those who understand these mysteries will be given more knowledge, and they will excel in understanding them. However, some people don't understand these mysteries. Even what they understand will be taken away from them.

13 This is why I speak to them this way. They see, but they're blind. They hear, but they don't listen. They don't even try to understand.

14 So they make Isaiah's prophecy come true: 'You will hear clearly but never understand. You will see clearly but never comprehend.

15 These people have become close-minded and hard of hearing. They have shut their eyes so that their eyes never see. Their ears never hear. Their minds never understand. And they never return to me for healing!

16 "Blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear.

17 I can guarantee this truth: Many prophets and many of God's people longed to see what you see but didn't see it, to hear what you hear but didn't hear it.

10 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"

11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: 'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.'

15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Understand Setting

In the first century, Jesus taught about the kingdom of God through a parable about a sower and soils that people were familiar with. Although this parable is known as "the Parable of the Sower," the core of the message Jesus intended to convey is the soils where the seed was sown. In Old Testament history, the land also came to mean the heart of a person who receives God's Word. For example, Old Testament prophets compared the hearts of Israel, who disobeyed God's Word, to "hardened hearts." The prophet Ezekiel also foretold that God would give a soft heart (Ezekiel 36:26). In today's passage as well, Jesus speaks by comparing the "heart that receives God's Word" or the "response to the gospel" to four kinds of soil. Through this Word, we also examine our own hearts as we receive God's Word before Him.

Meditate the Text

1 Observation As Jesus tells the crowd the parable of the sower, what are the four kinds of soil He mentions? (verses 4–8)

The four kinds of soil Jesus mentioned are the path, rocky ground, among thorns, and good soil.

Explanation The main focus of this passage is on the four kinds of soil where the seed fell. The path, in the original language, refers to a road beside a field or the ridge of a field. According to Jesus' interpretation of the parable, the birds represent Satan or the evil one. Because the person hears the Word only superficially, Satan, expressed as the birds, takes it away.

Rocky ground refers to land with bedrock underneath and only a thin layer of soil on top. Because of sunlight, the ground heats up quickly. As a result, the seed sprouts, but because moisture escapes easily and high temperatures are maintained, it withers quickly. According to Jesus' interpretation, this represents a heart that initially focuses enthusiastically on the Word but later gives up because of various problems and persecution.

The seed that could not grow because it was choked by thorns initially sprouts and grows to some extent, but because of obstacles—such as greed and worldly worries—it can no longer continue to grow. We must be careful to see whether there is greed or worldly anxiety in our hearts. Good soil refers to well-cultivated land and represents a heart that listens to the Word with openness and bears fruit. In the ancient Near Eastern society, even a harvest of tenfold or twentyfold was considered successful. The mention of a harvest of thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold in this passage signifies an extremely abundant yield.

2 Observation Why does Jesus speak the secrets of the kingdom of heaven in parables? (verses 11, 13)

So that only those whom God has allowed may know, while others do not see, do not hear, and do not understand.

Explanation Some scholars have suggested that one of the reasons Jesus spoke in parables was the background of the Jews rejecting His teaching. It is inferred that Jesus intended people not to reject His words like the Jews did, but rather to receive the Word well, like good soil.

In response to the question of why He teaches in parables, Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9–10. That is, the reason Jesus used parables is directly related to God's sovereignty. God desired to reveal the truth through parables to those whom He has chosen. However, to those who are not chosen, God's truth will not be revealed. We can see that understanding the Word is also a grace given within God's sovereignty.

3 **Application** When I hear or read the Word, what are the reasons I cannot keep it for a long time? Share how we can bear fruit like good soil.

Explanation When we consider the characteristics of the four kinds of soil, we must ask ourselves the following questions. Am I so overwhelmed by a busy schedule that I cannot focus on God's Word and am having my heart taken away by Satan? Did I make a decision in faith at first, but later give up on practicing it or stop obeying a certain Word? Is there any area where I am delaying obedience to the Word because of greed or excessive worry in my heart? What is absolutely necessary in order to bear fruit is to receive the Word with joy and to not give it up, but to persevere to the end. If by God's grace we hold fast to the Word until the end, God will allow us to see the fruit of His grace.

Review the Text

Jesus spoke the parable of the sower to His disciples. The sower represents Jesus, and the four kinds of soil refer to the attitudes of those who receive the Word. The seeds that fell on the path, on rocky ground, and among thorns did not bear fruit. However, the seed that fell on good soil produced a harvest—thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. Today, we must receive God's Word with joy, lay down greed and anxiety, and hold firmly to the Word to the end. When we do so, God will, by His grace, cause us to reap an abundant harvest.

Pray through the Text

- 1 Grant us hearts that long for Your Word, and help us lay down excessive anxiety.
- 2 As we hold fast to Your Word and walk in perseverance and obedience, grant us abundant fruit.

Word Studies

Verse 3a **Parables** In the Gospel of Matthew, the word "parable" first appears in chapter 13. A parable is a means of conveying thought by mentioning similar concepts together. Among the many parables Jesus spoke, Matthew lists those he considers most beneficial for the early church community or the Jewish audience. "From Matt. 13:3, we assume that Jesus told many parables (cf. 1 Kings 5:12 LXX [4:32 Eng.]) and that Matthew selects representative stories reflecting the gist of Jesus's teaching, parables that Matthew views as most relevant for his community." — David L. Turner, *Matthew*, 338.

Verse 3b **The Sower** This passage is often known as the Parable of the Sower. In this parable, the sower represents Jesus Himself. However, the central focus of the parable is the soil, which represents "our hearts receiving the Word." "Jesus himself is the sower, but the parable has immediate application to the disciples' ministry and ultimate application to the later church's proclamation." — David L. Turner, *Matthew*, 341.

Verse 4 The Path The seed fell along the path, and birds came and ate it. The term “path” in the original language refers to a road beside a field or the ridge of a field. According to Jesus’ interpretation, the birds represent Satan or the evil one. Because the Word was received superficially, Satan, represented by the birds, took it away.

Verse 5 Rocky Soil In the Jewish region, rocky soil refers to land with bedrock underneath and only a thin layer of soil. Such soil heats quickly in the sun. The seed sprouts but soon withers because moisture is lost and the high temperature persists. According to Jesus’ interpretation, this represents a heart that initially focuses passionately on the Word but later gives up due to problems, persecution, or other difficulties. “The rocky soil of Matt. 13:5–6 refers to an underlying shelf of bedrock, not multiple rocks in the soil. Such soil warms rapidly and the seed sprouts quickly, but the plant soon wilts as the soil loses moisture (cf. James 1:11).” — David L. Turner, *Matthew*, 338.

Verse 7 Among Thorns The seed that was choked by thorns initially sprouted and grew, but because of obstacles—such as greed or worldly worries—it could not continue to grow. We must be careful to see whether there is greed or worldly anxiety in our hearts.

Verse 8 Yield of Thirty, Sixty, a Hundredfold In the ancient Near East, even a tenfold or twentyfold harvest was considered a successful outcome. Mentioning thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold signifies an extraordinarily large harvest, meaning that those who receive the Word and God’s kingdom fully will bear great fruit. “The most unusual feature of the parable is the extraordinary crop produced by the seed that fell on good soil. A tenfold to twentyfold yield was often considered superior.” — Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (TNAC), 170.

Verse 10 Why Parables? Some scholars suggest that Jesus used parables partly because of the background of the Jews rejecting His teaching. In response, Jesus cites Isaiah 6:9–10, showing that the use of parables is directly related to God’s sovereignty. God desires to reveal the truth through parables to those He has chosen, but those not chosen will not understand His truth. Understanding the Word is thus a grace given within God’s sovereignty. “As Jesus speaks to the crowd, his disciples ask him why he is speaking in parables (cf. Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10). Jesus’s answer implies that this manner of speaking is due to the rejection of his message by many of his listeners, but it is ultimately due to God’s sovereign purpose to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom (cf. Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10) to whom God chooses (cf. Matt. 11:25–27).” — David L. Turner, *Matthew*, 339.

Verse 11 It has been given to you The passage uses the divine passive form grammatically, meaning that people understand because God has allowed it. Citing Isaiah 6:9–10, this passage strongly emphasizes God’s sovereignty. “Finite humans will never fully understand the interplay of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility. Matthew 13:11–15, with its citation of Isa. 6:9–10, is one of the strongest biblical affirmations of God’s prerogative to reveal himself as he sees fit.” — David L. Turner, *Matthew*, 340.



Embracing the members with a shepherd's heart

Small Group Preview

Small Group Usage

| Living Life Weekly Bible Study 4, February 23rd Scripture, P184 |

Focus

A confession of faith in Jesus leads us to the path of the cross.

Ice Breakers

Fill in the blank and share your reason:

To me, Jesus is _____.

Examine God's Word

Read Matthew 16:13–28 together. Circle or underline words or expressions that are repeated or carry important meaning.

Understand Setting

Jesus took His disciples to the region of Caesarea Philippi, likely intentionally. This was not an ordinary city; it was a place crowded with many temples, almost like a “mall of temples.” Bringing His disciples to a place where the world worshipped false gods, Jesus asked them, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” and then asked again, “But who do you say that I am?” The pronoun “you” emphasizes that Jesus was focusing on the disciples’ personal confession. Even today, Jesus asks His followers, “Who do you say that I am?” Through this passage, we examine who Jesus is and how those who follow Him should live.

Meditate the Text

1 ◀ **Observation** How did Peter confess in response to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” (verses 15–16)

2 **Observation** What attitude and commitment are required for those who want to follow Jesus? (verses 24–26)

3 **Application** Share a time when you sacrificed or suffered loss for Jesus, or if you have not yet experienced this, discuss what commitment you need to make.

Review the Text

In response to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. The term "Christ" affirms that Jesus is the long-promised Messiah in the Old Testament covenant. Calling Him the Son of God emphasizes His divinity, showing that Jesus is greater than the Roman emperor or any other god. Those who confess Jesus in this way are now called to deny themselves and prioritize God and His kingdom above all. True disciples of Jesus will receive God's reward when Jesus returns in glory.

Pray through the Text

- 1 Grant us the faith to boldly confess Jesus and become disciples who maintain intimate fellowship with Him.
- 2 In every decision we face, help us deny ourselves and choose to follow Jesus.



Embracing the members with a shepherd's heart

Small Group Preview

Leader Usage

Living Life Weekly Bible Study 4, February 23rd Scripture, P184

Focus

A confession of faith in Jesus leads us to the path of the cross.

Ice Breakers

Fill in the blank and share your reason:

To me, Jesus is _____ .

Examine God's Word

Read Matthew 16:13–28 together. Circle or underline words or expressions that are repeated or carry important meaning.

NIV	GOD'S WORD	ESV
<p>13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"</p> <p>14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."</p> <p>15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"</p> <p>16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."</p> <p>17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.</p> <p>18 And I tell you that you are Peter,^[a] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades^[b] will not overcome it.</p> <p>19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be^[c] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^[d] loosed in heaven."</p>	<p>13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"</p> <p>14 They answered, "Some say you are John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."</p> <p>15 He asked them, "But who do you say I am?"</p> <p>16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"</p> <p>17 Jesus replied, "Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! No human revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven revealed it to you.</p> <p>18 You are Peter, and I can guarantee that on this rock^[a] I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not overpower it.</p> <p>19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you imprison, God will imprison. And whatever you set free, God will set free."</p>	<p>13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"</p> <p>14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."</p> <p>15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"</p> <p>16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."</p> <p>17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.</p> <p>18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^[b] I will build my church, and the gates of hell^[c] shall not prevail against it.</p> <p>19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[d] in heaven."</p>

20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

21 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, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

25 For whoever wants to save their life[e] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

28 Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

20 Then he strictly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

21 From that time on Jesus began to inform his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem. There he would have to suffer a lot because of the leaders, the chief priests, and the experts in Moses' Teachings. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be brought back to life.

22 Peter took him aside and objected to this. He said, "Heaven forbid, Lord! This must never happen to you!"

23 But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get out of my way, Satan! You are tempting me to sin. You aren't thinking the way God thinks but the way humans think."

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Those who want to come with me must say no to the things they want, pick up their crosses, and follow me.

25 Those who want to save their lives will lose them. But those who lose their lives for me will find them.

26 What good will it do for people to win the whole world and lose their lives? Or what will a person give in exchange for life?

27 The Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory. Then he will pay back each person based on what that person has done.

28 I can guarantee this truth: Some people who are standing here will not die until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! [e] This shall never happen to you."

23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance[f] to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

25 For whoever would save his life[g] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

28 Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Understand Setting

Jesus took His disciples to the region of Caesarea Philippi, likely intentionally. This was not an ordinary city; it was a place crowded with many temples, almost like a "mall of temples." Bringing His disciples to a place where the world worshipped false gods, Jesus asked them, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" and then asked again, "But who do you say that I am?" The pronoun "you" emphasizes that Jesus was focusing on the disciples' personal confession. Even today, Jesus asks His followers, "Who do you say that I am?" Through this passage, we examine who Jesus is and how those who follow Him should live.

Meditate the Text

1 < **Observation** How did Peter confess in response to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" (verses 15–16)

Simon Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Explanation In the text, the phrase literally says "You" rather than "the Christ" (ESV: You are the Christ). The term Christ comes from the Greek word meaning "anointed one." In the Old Testament, those who were anointed included kings, high priests, and prophets. In this passage, the emphasis is on Jesus as the anointed king, because the Jews had long awaited the eternal king from David's line—the Messiah. Peter also confessed Jesus as the Son of God, affirming His divinity. Caesarea Philippi, where this confession occurred, was full of temples to many gods. Amidst this setting, Peter boldly declared, "Jesus is the highest king sent by God."

2 < **Observation** What attitude and commitment are required for those who want to follow Jesus? (verses 24–26)

We must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. Whoever seeks to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Jesus will find it.

Explanation The phrase "deny yourself" is a figurative expression meaning absolute obedience to God's will wherever you go. Denying oneself does not mean self-abuse or destroying self-worth. Disciples maintain a healthy self-awareness grounded in God's grace. To deny oneself means placing all priorities on God and His kingdom.

3 < **Application** Share a time when you sacrificed or suffered loss for Jesus, or if you have not yet experienced this, discuss what commitment you need to make.

Explanation Jesus taught that disciples who confess their faith must follow Him by denying themselves and walking in His way. Because following Jesus is a priority, disciples often experience loss, suffering, hardship, or difficulty. Share moments when your faith in Jesus led you to give up something or experience loss.

Review the Text

In response to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. "Christ" affirms that Jesus is the long-promised Messiah in the Old Testament covenant. Calling Him the Son of God emphasizes His divinity, declaring that Jesus is higher than the Roman emperor or any other gods. Those who confess Jesus in this way are called to deny themselves and live with God and His kingdom as their highest priority. True disciples of Jesus will receive God's reward when He returns in glory.

Pray through the Text

- 1 Grant us the faith to boldly confess Jesus and become disciples who maintain intimate fellowship with Him.
- 2 In every decision we face, help us deny ourselves and choose to follow Jesus.

Word Studies

Verse 13 **Caesarea Philippi** The city called Caesarea Philippi was named after two people. In Greek, the word for emperor is *Caesar*, so *Caesarea* means a city dedicated to the emperor. The name *Philippi* comes from Herod Philip, the tetrarch governing the region at that time. Philip was politically astute and sought the favor of the Roman emperor, Augustus. He built the city and dedicated it to the emperor, naming it Caesarea Philippi. "Formerly known as Paneas, a center of worship for the Greek god Pan, the city recently had been renamed by Philip the tetrarch in honor of himself and Augustus Caesar." — Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: TNAC Commentary*, 200.

Verse 14 **John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah** People thought Jesus might be John the Baptist because he was the most influential recent prophet. They thought of Elijah because he performed many miracles, and Malachi promised his return (Mal. 4:5). Some thought of Jeremiah because he faced severe persecution when declaring Judah's judgment, which paralleled the opposition Jesus experienced. "Many had obviously not made the link between Elijah and John the Baptist. It would be natural to think of Jesus also as a kind of Jeremiah, a preacher of judgment and repentance who was widely rejected by the leaders of his nation." — David L. Turner, *Matthew: Baker Commentary*, 403; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: TNAC Commentary*, 200.

Verse 16 **You are the Christ** Although the text says "the Christ," the original Greek simply uses *you* (second person singular). The ESV translates it as "You are the Christ." The term *Christ* means "anointed one," referring in the Old Testament to kings, high priests, and prophets. Here, it strongly emphasizes Jesus as the anointed king, since Jews were waiting for the eternal king from David's line—the Messiah.

Verse 17 Son of the living God Peter also confessed Jesus as the Son of God, affirming His divinity. Caesarea Philippi contained many temples, including one dedicated to Augustus as a god, a cave where sacrifices were made to Pan, and other temples to Zeus, Nemesis, and sacred goats. Amidst all these false gods, Peter boldly declared that Jesus is the highest King sent by God.

Verse 18 You are Peter... on this rock After Peter's confession, Jesus refers to Peter. In Greek, Peter's name (*Petros*) and the word "rock" (*petra*) sound similar, creating a wordplay. Jesus mentions the church (*ekklesia*) here for the first time, showing Peter's special role. "The play on words in the Greek between Peter's name (*Petros*) and the word 'rock' (*petra*) makes sense only if Peter is the rock and if Jesus is about to explain the significance of this identification." — Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: TNAC Commentary*, 201.

Verse 18b Gates of Hades Literally, it means "the gates of Hades will not overcome it," signifying that nothing can stop the church's advance. Considering the mustard seed parable, this emphasizes that the church will grow despite small beginnings.

"This interpretation fits better into the historical context of the increasing hostility against Jesus and his small band of disciples. The parables of the mustard seed and yeast (13:31–33) have already promised surprisingly large results and a widespread impact, despite inauspicious beginnings." — Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: TNAC Commentary*, 202.

Verse 19 Keys of the Kingdom Jesus promised Peter the keys of the kingdom, meaning authority to bind and loose. Many support the translation "forbid" and "allow" (GNB). This signifies that the church has authority through testimony, preaching, and ministry to open or close the way into God's kingdom.

Verse 23 Get behind me, Satan Attempts to hinder Jesus' mission are the work of Satan. When Peter spoke against God's plan, Jesus called him "Satan," indicating that Peter's perspective, though unintentional, aligned with the enemy's. "Trying to thwart God's plan for Jesus' life is in fact the role of the devil, not of a disciple; hence, Christ's reply. Jesus is not accusing Peter of literal demon possession, but he is dramatically indicating that the perspective Peter represents, however unwittingly, is the same as Satan's. Peter therefore is no longer acting like the foundation block of the church but like a 'stumbling block.'" — Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: TNAC Commentary*, 206.

Verse 24 Deny yourself and take up your cross This figuratively means absolute obedience to God's will. Denying oneself does not mean self-abuse or destroying self-esteem. Disciples have a healthy self-awareness based on God's grace. Denying oneself means placing all priorities on God and His kingdom. "Self-denial does not imply self-abuse or lack of self-esteem. As Jesus' disciples, believers should have a better self-image than any other people, but it should be based on God's grace and not their merit. Self-denial does, however, mean putting God and his kingdom priorities first." — Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: TNAC Commentary*, 207.

Verse 28 The Son of Man coming in His kingdom Many scholars interpret this as referring to the resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, or Christ's judgment when the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. It does not mean Jesus would return while the Twelve were still alive.

"Other popular but less probable views of 'the Son of Man coming in his kingdom' include taking the

clause to refer to the resurrection, the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, or Christ's coming in judgment to destroy the temple in A.D. 70. Still others think that Jesus mistakenly expected to return while some of the Twelve were still living." — Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: TNAC Commentary*, 207.

Ministry Prayer Request for January

Major Ministry Schedule

- Fill all ministry team leadership planning and organizing for the new year with the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- Continue to use us through mission pledges and intercessory prayer pledges so that the gospel may be proclaimed more powerfully this year.
- Through Mission Essentials 101 (2/28) training, help outreach participants clearly understand their identity as sent Christians, and joyfully participate in God's mission with prepared obedience that strengthens the community.
- Give wisdom and pour out all necessary grace on the ministry team and campaign team preparing the "30 Days of Workship" campaign.
- Through the "30 Days of Workship Conference" (Online & On-site Workship Global Summit, 3/27-28), grant the congregation the grace to live as missionaries in their daily lives and workplaces.
- Give leadership and wisdom to group leaders and assistants serving the small groups so that unity may be achieved.
- Bless EW congregation members with abundant grace during worship, and help small groups and their leaders properly guide and integrate new members.

Next Generation Prayer Requests

- Send teachers and volunteers serving Sonlight, fill them with the Holy Spirit, and help them embrace the heart of Jesus. May all teachers, volunteers, and children in Sonlight grow to resemble Jesus.
- Open the hearts of Coram Deo students during the February 20–22 retreat, that they may personally encounter Jesus and experience true life transformation with the Word at the center.
- During the NEXT students' February 14–16 retreat at Warm Beach Camp, may they personally meet God and grow into a close relationship with Him.
- Grant EW College students the grace to experience God and deepen fellowship through His Word.
- Strengthen the faith of NeWave youth through the new sermon series, and raise them as true worshippers who please God.

