

A NOTE TO PARENTS

What is Jesus? What do we call him? We call him *Savior* and *Lord*, *Master* and *Redeemer*, *Messiah* and *Christ* and *Son of God*. What do we mean by these words, and how did we come to use them?

The Jewish people in Jesus' time had developed a detailed expectation that God would one day send them a particular chosen leader, a liberator who would free them from foreign conquerors and establish their nation in independence and strength, justice and peace. Their name for this unknown, coming leader was *Messiah*, which is Hebrew for "anointed." *Anointing* a person with oil signified that that person had been chosen by God and the people to be their leader.

Christ is the Greek translation of *Messiah*; it also means "anointed." The Jews did not expect the Messiah to be the "Son of God" in the way we use this expression for Jesus, that is, that his nature would be truly divine. The Messiah was not expected to be "God come to earth," but rather a human leader of such exalted greatness that he could be described as "the Son of God."

Jewish tradition also recognized other kinds of leaders. *Prophets* are those who are especially tuned to God's will for the people, and make it known, as a reminder, a promise, or a warning. *Elijah*, the faithful prophet who clung to the worship of Israel's God when all others had turned to idols, had already become the revered legendary figure he still is in modern Judaism: he would walk the earth, especially at the holy seasons, visiting the devout with blessing and announcing the coming of the Messiah himself. Since New Testament times, Christians have identified John the Baptist with Elijah, but in Jesus' day this identification was much more free-floating. Jesus himself was described as both "Elijah" and "John the Baptist." In the midst of all these options, Jesus asks his friends to make a definite choice. Peter, typically, jumps right in, with the most radical combination of names: *The Messiah, the Son of God*. And Jesus does not say, "Yes, that's a possibility; who else has another idea?" Instead, he says, "Yes." And he asks us, too, to make a choice, and to declare ourselves. It is on such faith that he can build his Church.

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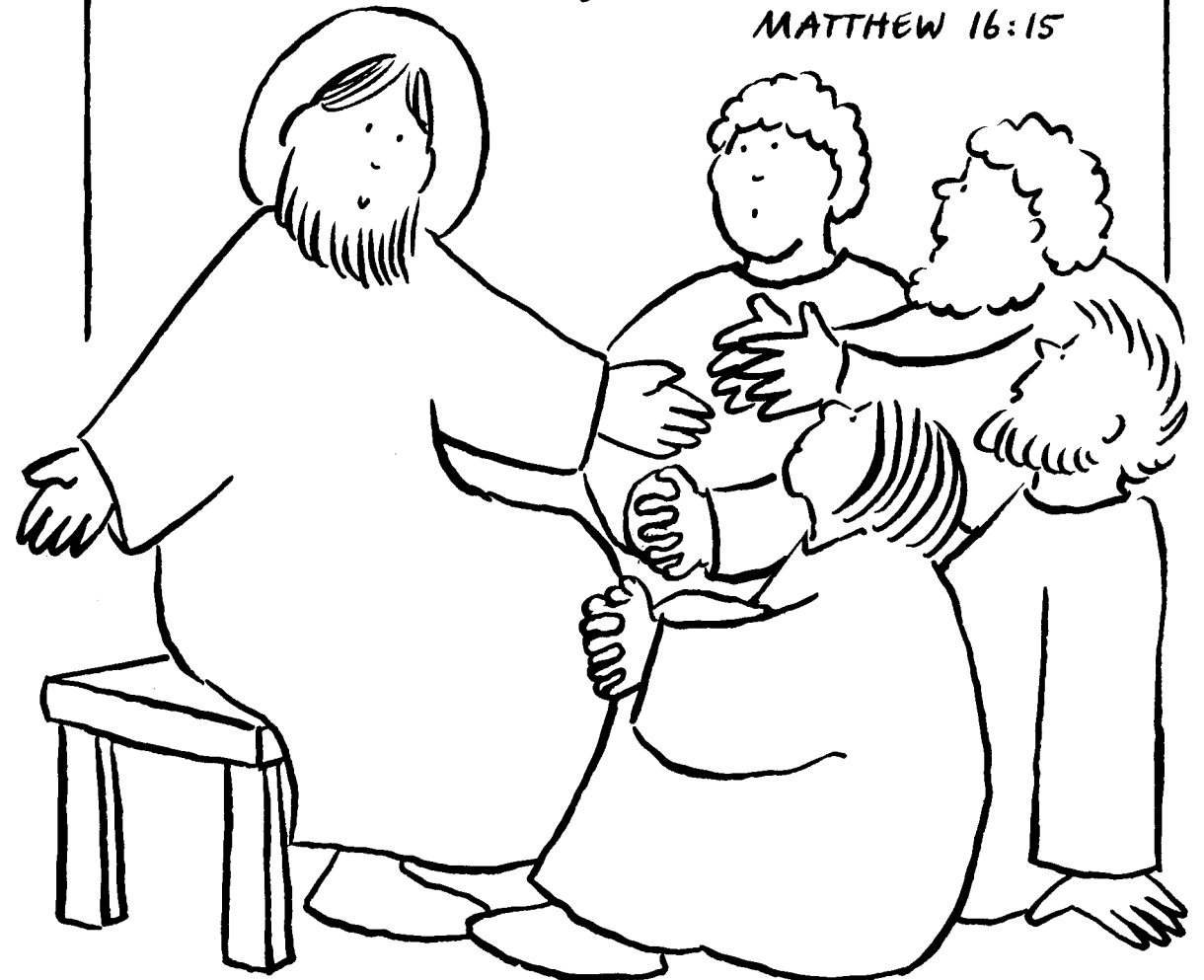


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Year A
PROPER 16
TRACKS 1 and 2

Jesus asked his friends,
"Who do you say that I am?
What would you call me?"

MATTHEW 16:15



JESUS WAS FAMOUS. PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT HIM A LOT.

Some of them said, "He is a great prophet-like Isaiah and Jeremiah long ago."



THUS SAYS THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL...

A man in a long robe is reading a scroll. A speech bubble from him says, "THUS SAYS THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL...".

Some said, "Maybe he is Elijah, coming back from heaven to tell us that God's Kingdom is coming."



A man with a long beard and a staff is walking. A sun is in the sky above him.

Jesus asked his friends, "What do you think?" Simon said, "You are the MESSIAH - the Savior - the Son of God!"



A man with a long beard and a crown is shown with a halo around his head.

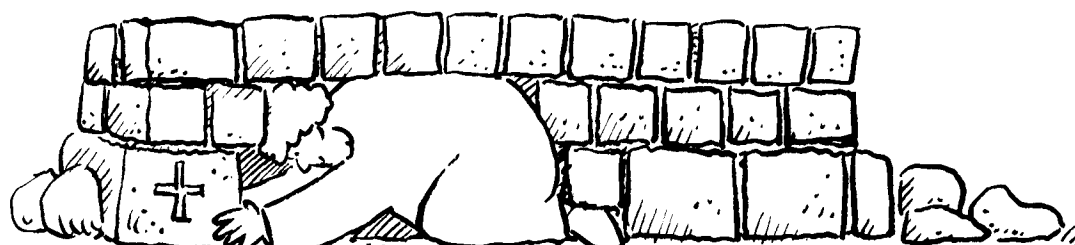
Jesus said, "You did not get that idea all by yourself. It came to you from God."



A man with a long beard is pointing towards a group of people who are gathered around him.

Simon's other name was Peter. PETER means "the Rock." Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my church, and nothing will knock it down."

Peter did not always understand what Jesus was doing. But he believed in him. Because Peter loved Jesus and believed in him, God gave him more understanding than he would have had by himself. Jesus said, "That's what my church needs to grow."



A man is kneeling and building a wall with stones. One stone has a cross on it.

Build a church on Peter the Rock.