

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit

Worship at Home 4th July 2021

Who do say Jesus is?

During the month of June, our focus was on Bible Month, 30 days set aside to study one Book of the Bible. This year that was Mark, and you may have read the Gospel throughout the month. If not, don't worry, Mark is also the focus for the Lectionary year - so we are going to hear a lot more from Mark about who Jesus is and what it means to live in his kingdom.

Mark begins his Gospel with the words "The beginning of the Good News about Jesus ... Today we are going to think about who Jesus is to us, and consider our answer to the question Jesus set his disciples.

"Who do you say I am?"

Call to worship

Lord Jesus Christ, you came to us,
lived amongst us, sharing our joy and pain.
Today, we come to you,
help us to be still and feel your presence,
loving us, caring for us and holding us safe.
Amen.

Hymn StF 356

www.youtube.com/watch?v=alg8vQ3u9SE&list=PLi-BkbVuZAxvYuNBV1OlxPE9THTTZL03-&index=21

Jesus shall take the highest honour,
Jesus shall take the highest praise;
let all earth join heaven in exalting
the Name which is above all other names.
Let's bow the knee in humble adoration,
for at his name every knee must bow.
Let every tongue confess he is Christ,
God's only Son.
Sovereign Lord we give you glory now.

For all honour and blessing and power
belongs to you, belongs to you.
All honour and blessing and power
belongs to you, belongs to you,
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God.

Christopher Alan Bowater (b. 1947)

Prayers of adoration and confession

Lord Jesus Christ,
we come to you, our living Lord,
praising you for all you have done for us.
You are our teacher, our healer, our guide
and our dearest friend.
You are always by our side,
ready to share in our laughter,
or to hold us close in our deepest sorrow.
You made the ultimate sacrifice,
by dying so that we could live,
free from sin, and free to be loved utterly and
completely by our heavenly Father.

Majestic God, we thank you for your Son Jesus
whose name is above all other names.

Yet, you know our name,
and the thoughts of our hearts.
You know what makes us happy
and what makes us afraid
Jesus is our Lord and King,
and we want to serve him -
but we are afraid,
or lacking in courage to do that.

We are tempted by the ways of the world,
and stray from the path of the true Way,
that would lead us to you.
Give us courage when we doubt,
give us strength when we are afraid,
give us faith to follow Jesus when he calls us.
Forgive us for the things we do wrong,
forgive us when we do not do what we could,
help us to be your servants as Jesus taught us,
so that we can care for others and for creation
Lord God, open our hearts to your love and
mercy, so that we may know we are truly
forgiven and eternally loved by you. Amen.

Mark 8: 27-29

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages
of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked
his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?'
And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and
others, Elijah; and still others, one of the
prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you
say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are
the Messiah.'

Reflection "Who do you say I am?"

"Who do you say I am?"

Jesus asked his disciples.

Peter leapt up and declared,

"You are the Christ!"

meaning the Messiah, the promised one;

whom the prophet Isaiah described as

"Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

But, if Jesus stood beside you today,

how would you answer his

"Who do you say I am?"

Would you say "You are my friend";

the one who is always by my side,

sharing in all my joys and all my sorrows.

Perhaps you'd say,

"You are my Teacher, my guide to knowing

God better,

the one who teaches me the way I should live;

or my Leader, taking me along the right path.

Perhaps you'd say "You are the shepherd,

searching for the lost sheep that is me,

and bringing me safely home.

Or, may be the lamb – the Lamb of God,

the one who was the ultimate sacrifice for all
our sins;

the lamb that is our Saviour, our Redeemer.

He may be the Advocate, Counsellor,

standing beside us in all our human frailty

through whom we are forgiven for all that we
do wrong.

There are so many words to describe who
Jesus is.

What does Jesus mean to you?

Is he the bread of life,

filling you with love and peace,

sustaining you, keeping you spiritual healthy?

Or the Healer who takes away our pain.

Perhaps he is the light of the world,

shining into your darkness,

your cornerstone, building you up with hope

and courage to face the future,

or is he the vine, where we are the branches,
the disciples of today, ready to serve him

who is our servant King.

Is Jesus your Lord and King?

The Lord of all creation - including you?

Is he the Way, the Truth you believe

and the one you love more than anything.

Jesus can be so many things, but most of all

Jesus is the Son of God, who loves us so much
he died for us, crucified on a cruel cross,

so that we might live in eternal glory with him,
our resurrected Lord.

Who do you say Jesus is for you today?

Faced with the task of highlighting just one
phrase to describe who Jesus is for me today,

I settled on 'Jesus is the bread of life' and the
following passage from Mark's Gospel:

Bible Reading Mark 8: 1-10

In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, 'I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance.' His disciples replied, 'How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?' He asked them, 'How many loaves do you have?' They said, 'Seven.' Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Word

Many of us are really familiar with the Miracle of the Feeding of the 5000. It's a lovely story of how a small boy with his packed lunch of loaves and fishes helps Jesus to feed a large body of people - many more than 5000, as the women and children aren't counted, Matthew tells us. All four Gospel writers tell that story of how Jesus fed the people of Galilee who came to listen to him preach. They would be Jewish.

Immediately afterwards – Mark does like to imply Jesus did everything in a rush – Jesus heads towards Tyre and then Sidon, cities of Phoenicia, Gentile territory, where he continues his healing ministry, before being followed into the countryside by a large crowd once more. After 3 days, Jesus worries about them all getting hungry, so he tests his disciples. “I'm worried about them all, if I send them home some may collapse on the way, especially those who have far to travel”, he says. The disciples have clearly forgotten what happened in Galilee. “Where could anyone find enough bread to feed them in this remote place”, is their reply. You can just picture Jesus shaking his head, and wondering if his disciples will ever understand.

“How many loaves have you?” Jesus asks. A quick search and they find 7 loaves and a few fishes (so presumably more than 2). They are doing better this time, there were only 5 loaves and 2 fish for 5000, this time they have 7 loaves and several fishes for a mere 4000! But clearly, they were more hungry. There were only 7 baskets of broken pieces, whereas there'd been 12 at the earlier miracle.

Are those numbers significant? The 12 tribes of Israel fed initially, when Jesus was teaching the Jewish people. This time though, the 4000 comprise of Gentiles; does the 7 remind us that God created all the world in seven days, and his love, care and compassion is not just for his chosen Jewish nation. Jesus brings the message of God's love, peace and justice to all the world. He is the bread of life that is on offer to all – sufficient nourishment, with spare to share.

But significantly, Jesus doesn't do this alone. His disciples are asked to work too. At the feeding of the 5000, they are told to arrange the people in groups of 50 or 100, and they are the ones to distribute the food, and clear up afterwards, just as they do with the 4000.

Jesus likes us to help him, and I know many of you support our Food Banks, so that the hungry are fed today.

The disciples didn't understand their role within God's kingdom on earth, at least not until Pentecost, I wonder are we any better. Yet, the miracle of feeding the hungry continues; we read of Jesus doing this twice, but we, his followers, have been doing it through the ages over and over again, helping those starving through times of plague, famine and war.

Mark begins his Gospel by saying 'The beginning of the Good News about Jesus the Messiah'. Note the word 'beginning', the start of hearing about who Jesus is – but if you flick to the end of Mark, there is no ending. The earliest manuscripts of Mark's words end when the women leave the empty tomb – they flee, but Mark doesn't say what happened next. Verses 9-20 were added later by others.

It's a good thing the women gained their courage and told what they'd seen – 'Jesus is alive!' so the Good News could continue to be heard. We are part of that continuing Word but also need courage to say it.

I began this service with Jesus' question “Who do say I am?”

I end with another question.

Who does Jesus say you are?

You may have many names – parent, brother, daughter, carer, neighbour, friend, comforter. To Jesus, you are a child of God, and part of his kingdom. So consider what Jesus is calling you to do for him in his kingdom today. Amen.

Hymn: 465

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFQX03qfuqY

- 1 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore;
feed me now and evermore.

- 2 Open thou the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream shall flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.

- 3 When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

William Williams (1717-1791)
translated by Peter Williams (1727-1796)

Prayers for Intercession

Lord Jesus, as people of your kingdom here on earth, we pray for all Christians everywhere, that they may have a clear vision of your purpose in their lives and the life of the church; that they may have strength of faith in times of adversity or persecution and that they have courage and determination to speak up for peace and justice.
The Lord hears our prayer, **thanks be to God.**

We pray for all those whose compassion and care for others shines through in their actions, thinking especially of doctors, nurses, social workers and carers.

We pray for teachers, in schools, colleges, universities - and churches, who inspire pupils to seek knowledge and understanding about our world, to realise how our actions effect our planet's ability to sustain life – all life, plant, animal and human.
The Lord hears our prayer, **thanks be to God.**

We pray for all those in authority, leaders of nations and governments, that they will seek your guidance, and through the Holy Spirit, allow your influence in their roles as guardians of their country's welfare, both social and economic; that the values of the kingdom of God would be reflected in the peace and justice within their nation.

The Lord hears our prayer, **thanks be to God.**

We pray for those who are weary, inflicted with pain, overwhelmed with grief, broken by violence, crushed by injustice and crying out for healing.
Lord, fill us with your Spirit that we may reach out to those who are hurting today, through prayer, or physical action.
The Lord hears our prayer, **thanks be to God.**

Lord, we pray for ourselves, You call us by name, commission us to serve, heal our wounds, renew our lives and enable us to follow your Way, not our way.
The Lord hears our prayer, **thanks be to God.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

For our final hymn, I have chosen one written for "Thy Kingdom Come 2021", a 10 day prayer initiative held from Ascension Day to Pentecost.

Hymn (to tune *Abide with me*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDEPe3-UxCY>

We seek your kingdom throughout every sphere
We long for heaven's demonstration here
Jesus your light shine bright for all to see
Transform, revive, and heal society

Before all things, in him were all things made
Inspiring culture, media, and trade
May all our work serve your economy
Transform, revive, and heal society

Peace, truth, and justice reigning everywhere
With us be present in our public square
Fill all who lead with your integrity
Transform, revive, and heal society

Forgive us Lord, when we have not engaged
Failing to scribe your heart on history's page
Make us again what we were made to be
Transform, revive, and heal society

Faithful to govern ever may we be
Selfless in service, loving constantly
In everything may your authority
Transform, revive, and heal society
Noel Robinson, Andy Flannagan, & Graham Hunter
(Written for Thy Kingdom Come 2021)

Blessing

Lord Jesus, send us out in your name,
to serve the world
and to love our neighbour as ourselves.
Send us out in faith and hope,
that we may be selfless in service,
always loving you. Amen.

And may the blessing of the Father, Son and
Holy Spirit, be with you today, and everyday.
Amen.

Kathy Lowrie