

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, August 27th, 2023, Pentecost 13
Exodus 1:8-2:10 Psalm 124 Romans 12:1-8 Matthew 16:13-20

Several years ago, a fellow clergy said that he changed his view of the ordination of women from being against it to being for it because he liked and felt more at home with those in favour of the ordination of women than those against.

Why am I telling you this? Because in today's gospel reading Jesus asks two questions.....

Yes, he asks, who do others say that I am and who do you say that I am?

Those are valid and important questions to begin with. For us to hear what others say about Jesus and then to make up our own minds about Jesus as the Messiah, and the Son of the living God.

As I mentioned, that is just the beginning. It is not enough to say, Jesus is the Messiah and Son of the living God, but what does it mean and how do we understand this? There is the whole Christology debate about the humanity and divinity of Jesus. And Diana Bulter Bass in her book *Freeing Jesus* comes up with various ways of seeing Jesus which were helpful to her at different stages of life.

As Friend, Teacher, Saviour, Lord, Way, and Presence.

But this brings up a second question; who are you? And it follows the same pattern as the question about who is Jesus? Who do others say and show you to be? And who do you understand yourself to be? Isn't this what Paul in Romans is thinking about when he says: *so, we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.*

And when Jesus says: *whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

This suggests to me the call to forgiveness of others and self. And forgiveness comes with understanding.

I am not saying to live our lives answering to and pleasing others, but we are missing the point if we live our lives in isolation from God in Christ, and just give lip service to our beliefs. In other words, how we understand God in Christ means how we understand ourselves and how we relate to the world and those around us.

In the same way, if we don't listen to what people say and act around us, we will miss taking this valuable way of understanding ourselves. It doesn't mean we have to only follow what they are saying and doing. We can disagree and do something other but it has a part to play in our understanding. In a way, it is like others hold up a mirror to

show the reflection of ourselves. If we like what we see, great, if not there may be some changes we may need to make.

This also is like so much of what Jesus says and asks, these questions don't get answered once and then we move on or forgot but are in a sense are ongoing. Different situations and stages of our lives may bring up the questions and call for an answer.

And Jesus says today: *We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.*

We are both similar and different from each other. Therefore, our answers to these questions will be such that we can understand each other's answers in all that means and yet will not be quite the same.

Maybe that is why: *he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.*

Maybe he didn't want this to get out too soon, because it would be just about healing on earth until the resurrection, And if people heard it at that time, they would either just believe it is true or not and would not take the time to see and understand the nuances of what a belief in Jesus brings to us as individuals within the context of a community.

Amen

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet
walk with you on the road.

May the Christ who serves with wounded hands
stretch out your hands to serve.

May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart
open your hearts to love.

May you see the face of Christ in ev'ryone you meet,
And may ev'ryone you meet see the face of Christ in you. Amen.