

Mark 8: 27-38

Jesus' disciples stumble about and are confused about who he is. Eventually he asks the question. Who do you say I am?

Jesus' question is a personal one for each one of us. Peter responded to Jesus: "You are The Messiah, the blessed one". Jesus sternly told the disciples to tell no one; then he promptly tells them disciples of his death and resurrection. What a bitter-sweet explanation this must have been. First the hope of fulfillment of the prophets then dashed hopes as he foretold his death.

What does it mean for you that Jesus is the Messiah? Do we embrace this truth and let it change us? What does it mean for our community that Jesus is the Messiah. This week like no other, we have to look beneath surface realities to our deep-seated concerns and anxieties alongside the fact that Jesus is the one who comes to bless.

I am going to draw on a framework from the theologian Richard Rohr. One of the major themes of his writings non-dualistic thinking. Rohr consistently explains the importance of bringing opposite visions together and letting go of ego-thinking. Explaining that in order to grow spiritually, we need to let go of rigid thinking. I find one of Rohr's concepts particularly helpful; that is the idea of my story, our story, and The Story¹.

If we look at the world from the standpoint of individual opinions, the focus on **me** means there is always the possibility of conflict with those who have different views. If we focus on our story; the needs and wants of the community, it is possible that our vision of the world divides into self and other. This dualistic vision can lead to blame and discrimination. Some are in and some are out. However, it is possible to bring my story, and our story, into a dialogue wholeness called The Story. This total world view holds together the

¹ Richard Rohr, Daily Meditation (on-line) August 28 2020 Passim

tensions generated by the other two. I recall when I was first introduced to this idea; synthesis antithesis opposites and synthesis in the mid-point. This undertaking is not easy.

In today's gospel Jesus himself talked about how hard it would be to hold to a reality or truth that was opposite to expectations. He would suffer and die, and he invites us to take up our cross and follow. This week we confront illness in one whom we love. So how do we connect with the deep mystery that heals and comforts us by living out of The Story?

We have to embrace the **prayer of love**. This is how the gospel becomes **a dynamic living-word**. The Story, tells us of God coming into the world; the incarnation through the babe of Bethlehem. Jesus ministry is a pledge of love and inclusiveness. His journey to the cross **is The Love Story**. Jesus went to his death with one message on his lips; "I love you".

The story is totally countercultural now as it was then. The Messiah, the Anointed One, was a deliverer, but he came on a donkey. He came not to dominate, but to liberate. Not to destroy, but to heal and restore. Jesus is a King, but not in the manner or style his contemporaries expected. He doesn't oppose with weapons, he has in mind a deeper more subversive form of resistance. Rather than the fist of opposition, he offers an open, loving, gentle gesture. He will lead a revolution, but it will be a revolution of love service and justice. On the surface he will suffer and be rejected and at the last, submit to the Roman imperial instrument of intimidation; the cross. But in giving himself to this cruelty, he will overturn all violence and hate, desecration, and lack of compassion once and for all. After three days he will rise again and a community of service and justice will be born. **You and I are called to carry that mantle forward.**

This week I read a lovely explanation of Jesus' teaching of The Story. Let me tell you a great mystery: deep down in creation, there is a

physics **more profound than the surface of things**, that superficial layer in which all appears to be driven by might and violence and grasping. Underneath all of that is a deeper physics, according to which what's truly important is actually driven by love and humility and generosity. To live according to this deeper physics means you will suffer and it also means that you will riseⁱ!

So what is the path that will connect our story to The Story? Jesus asks us to respond to the question: "Who do you say I am"? Our answer will have something to do with our relationship with what has been revealed through the ages as a Trinity of persons. That relationship changes hour by hour according to our attention and focus. We can answer from our mind through thinking or from knowledge that comes through our body, or out of the place of deep-mystery that is not easily articulated. We might connect with it in dreams or by engaging our imagination in music or some other creative expression. This is a place where God can bring the transformation that enables us to answer. You are the Messiah.

Our knowledge of God is shaped by the power and grace revealed through the Trinity that engages in a circle dance or a *perichoresis of Father Son and Holy Spirit*. The dance of the three hovers about us and we are constantly invited to join in the participatory knowledge of God. This is a personal, and communal miracle and the invitation to the eternal dance.

Today I invite you to reflect on your connection to The Story. Deal gently and lovingly with each other. Honour one another as we all work out how we are connected. Let's dance in the Spirit and with joy.

Thanks be to God.

¹ SALT Blog, for September 7 2021.

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References

Rohr, Richard Daily On-line Meditation Newsletter week 34 August 28, 2020.

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