

## Recognizing Jesus

### Mark 8:27-33

<sup>27</sup> *Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"*

<sup>28</sup> *They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."*

<sup>29</sup> *"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."*

<sup>30</sup> *Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.*

<sup>31</sup> *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.*

<sup>33</sup> *But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."*

## Who is Jesus?

This is a question that has been asked through the past 2000 years with varying answers.

Some say he is a figment of our imagination.

Some say he was a prophet like our Muslim friends.

Some believe he was a good man and a good teacher.

Some say he a bodhisattva – an enlightened one.

A number of us here will say, he is God.

But do we really know what we are saying?

## Two Questions

We are told that Jesus asked two questions of his followers.

The first is a hypothetical impersonal theoretical question.

*"Who do people say I am?"*

To this questions are multiple answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, a prophet.

It's a good question for intellectual argument.

It's the kind of question you can ask in a classroom and forget about.

But then Jesus asks the second question.

It is not a hypothetical impersonal theoretical question.

It is a subjective personal probing question.

*"Who do you say I am?"*

Peter gives a good religious answer

Perhaps something he suspected or something he wanted to be true.

*"You are the Messiah,"* Hebrew for "the anointed," the savior of Israel, the coming King.

Jesus tells him that he is right.

But does Peter know what he is saying?

And do we know what we are saying when we say Jesus is God?

### **Misunderstanding God**

You see, in the very next passage, Jesus tells the disciples that the Messiah,

Must suffer, be rejected by the powers that be, killed and be raised from the dead.

It is at this point that we are told that Peter takes Jesus aside and starts telling him off.

Why does Peter do this?

Because he thinks he knows what the Messiah is supposed to be like and what he is supposed to do.

Jesus tells him, "Get behind me Satan. You do not want the things of God but the things of man!"

Do we know what we are saying when we say "Jesus is God?"

You see, Peter didn't want a savior who would suffer, be rejected and die.

He wanted a king.

And when we say Jesus is God, what kind of God are we after?

A God who makes us feel good?

Who fits into our understanding?

Who is going to grant all our wishes?

Who is going to make us healthy, wealthy and wise?

Is this the Jesus we follow?

No!

### **The God that Jesus is:**

The God who is willing to forgive his enemies.

He is the God who raises up the humble, the broken and the contrite.

He is the God who opposes the proud, the oppressor and the unjust.

His power is used not to control others but to set them free.

Not to tell them what to do but to invite them to love and live with him.

Yes, there are ethics. Yes there are sins.

We have to lay pride and envy, greed and malice aside.

He is still just but he is also compassionate.

He is not a simplistic caricature of what we want.

And that is the point:

The God we worship this morning.

The Jesus the Derek is declaring is his Lord and Saviour;

Is not just an idea or concept we can manipulate into whatever we like.

He is the God who invites us into the adventure of discovering him.

And so the Question remains.

Not "who do people say I am."

But the one that will make you toss and turn

The one that will make you wrestle with your conscience and intellect

"Who do you say I am."

I have found that there is really one good reply:

Show me. Show me more of who you really are. Take from me my illusions, my assumptions.

Show me who you are, Jesus.