

Who do you say I am?



CALL TO WORSHIP : Psalm 95 ; Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

HYMN – And can it be (StF 345) **Watch on Youtube** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuFP3QMZTA0>

And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis myst'ry all: th' Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above—
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,

And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

(Charles Wesley 1738)

PRAYER

Holy God, who are you? You are Creator, Mighty God and Father. You are revealed to me in Jesus. But who is Jesus? Jesus is Lord, Savior and King, He is the One to whom my voice sings. Who is Jesus? Jesus is Redeemer, Shepherd, and friend, He is the One who has no end. Who is Jesus? Jesus is Servant, Master and Son. He is the One who for me has won. Who is Jesus? Jesus is MY Lord. Jesus is MY Savior. Jesus is MY Life. Jesus is the only way to You, Father God, and thus may Your Spirit teach me more and more of him and may Your Spirit draw me closer and closer to him. For if Jesus shows me You, and he does, then I want more of Jesus.

Who are You Father? You are Love. You are Grace. You are Mercy. You are. And thus to You be all glory, praise, honour, thanksgiving and worship, and I do so through Jesus Christ, Your Son and MY Lord, Amen.

(Prayer from The Heart of the Pastor blog)

READING: **Matthew 16: 13 – 20**

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

HYMN – All my days (StF 343) Watch on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSm6fdZH15Q>

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
Give my praise to the Fountain of delights;
For in my helplessness You heard my cry,
And waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails;
Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
Of death defeated and life without end.

Beautiful Saviour, Wonderful Counsellor,
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history,

You're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
You're the Risen One, heaven's Champion
And You reign, You reign over all.

I long to be where the praise is never-ending,
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades;
Where countless worshippers will share one song,
And cries of 'worthy' will honour the Lamb!

(Stuart Townend 1998)

ADDRESS : WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

The other day I was in a meeting a friend and he related a story concerning a woman who asked him what made him a Christian. I did toy with the idea of asking all of you that same question but then thought why I should ask you when I really need to ask myself that same question – and my quest for the answer began with that question Jesus asked his disciples and as he now asks me – “who do you say that I am”

When Jesus asks his question of his disciples Peter answers, “You are the Messiah”. Spot on – cannot fault Peter for that. Jesus then endeavours to teach more about who he is and what the future will hold. Now what does Peter do but get it completely wrong and starts telling Jesus he is wrong. You see no matter how much teaching Jesus gave his disciples they couldn't quite get it right. Peter had answered the question correctly yes but from what he had read, heard in the synagogue, heard from the mouth of Jesus. But no amount of teaching would have helped them understand until they understood it in their hearts.

Don't get me wrong we have to speak to people about who Jesus is in our lives, but for them to truly begin to think about what the Lord can do in their lives we need to speak from the heart and how the love of Jesus has changed us from within. No matter how many theological words we use like trinity, sanctification, redemption etc. etc. Nothing can bring more people to God than your deep-down belief that a life in Christ is the only life to live.

Over the past 12 months I am finding more and more people coming to bible study to learn more about something and somebody they already know about deep within themselves. That's where faith begins and ends – deep within yourself.

Have you noticed how important a role the heart plays in the bible, especially the gospels? Matthew tells us that Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart; Mark quotes Jesus as telling the disciples of their unbelief and hardness of heart; Jesus in John's gospel says 'let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid'; and the list goes on. The heart is where Jesus touched whenever he met people, and from their heart came the truth. In Matthew Jesus says 'For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks'. What we feel deep down in our hearts is where the truth lies, not always what comes out of our mouths.

Jesus truly cares for *our* hopes and *our* dreams. Everyone who speaks his name in prayer is the object of his affection and devotion. If we will open our hearts to him, he will join us on our journey and open our minds to heights and horizons beyond which we have not yet reached. Yes we need to open minds with the Word — but just like the two people on the road to Emmaus they were only able to recognize him not only by a meal made holy but by hearts that were transformed into burning hearts. How much do our hearts burn within us when we join in Holy Communion or when the scriptures are opened to us? Hearts should be ablaze with the good news of the gospel. They should energise people to witness to the hope of the resurrection in Jesus Christ. Burning hearts pump new life into people so they can give their lives away for others.

The disciples' at Pentecost had burning hearts and turned their hopelessness into hopefulness, their sadness into joy, their grief and confusion into explosive excitement and sheer determination to share their experience with the other disciples in Jerusalem.

Jesus wants to be our companion on the road of life. He has people to bless, lives to touch, hearts to transform. He calls us. He invites us to be part of his revolutionary movement to transform the world into burning hearts for God. Jesus wants you to be a disciple, ready to follow and willing to lead others to a relationship with God

Ordinary people, like you and me can be empowered by God to do extraordinary things. We can be empowered to have "burning hearts" as we accompany each other on the road of life.

I wonder if you can recall the first time you ever told someone (for whom you had strong feelings) that you really loved them. Your mouth got dry and your palms turned sweaty as you sought the courage to utter those words that are so powerful: "I love you." It's one thing to acknowledge that these three words are true. It's altogether something else to speak them and to realize how powerfully true they are. Because once they're spoken, you can no longer avoid the implications of them for your life.

Something like this happens when we hear Jesus asking us "Who do you say that I am?" or by those around us who ask us "who do you say that he is" The minute we hear this question rattling around in our heads, we have a choice. Either we can hold back and talk about this Christ figure whose sayings and deeds are written down in a precious ancient book, or we can decide to open up the fullness of our lives to other people by using the language of love. If we choose the second option for living our lives in Christ and through that choice enable another to come to Christ be prepared for a wild ride. Yes, there will be some hard times I imagine. But we and those we have shared our heart with will also have an incredibly abundant life, complete not only with Christ, but with everything else thrown in.

So, my conclusion to the question given to my friend at the beginning of my address – "what makes me a Christian" It is the deep love of Jesus Christ which holds firm in my heart who is my saviour, my Lord my beginning and my end.

"Who do you say that I am" Jesus asks us all today – what will be your answer?

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSIONS

(Please pray in your own way)

We pray for the Church and for a new revival

We pray for our country; for our government and all leaders who make the vital decisions.

We pray for the World and the turmoil it is in at present. We give thanks for the peace in Israel and Palestine but continue to pray for Ukraine/Russia. May they come to their senses and move away from war.

We pray for America and the incoming President, Donald Trump.

We pray for our family and friends.

We pray for ourselves.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers Amen

We say the Lord's prayer together

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.

HYMN – Guide me O thou great Jehovah (StF 465) Watch on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j48TLIRb4Q>

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy pow'rful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.

Strong Deliv'rer, strong Deliv'rer,
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield;
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

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 1745)*

BLESSING

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Be with us and remain with us always. AMEN