

2026 08 23 WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

This week we consider the question 'Who do you think I am?' Taking the disciples a long way north, Jesus wants to know if they have understood the truth of who he is yet. It is here that Simon is given the new name of 'Peter, the rock' as it is he who speaks up and offers a costly and risky answer to Jesus' question and calls him 'Messiah'. Jesus declares this moment one of divine revelation – one which signals the start of the Church, the beginning of a community enacting the purposes of heaven as heaven's agents on earth.

Every blessing to you all, Margaret.

Call to worship:

Jesus asked his disciples: 'Who do you say that I am?'

Come, claim Peter's reply as your own.

Come, and acknowledge the Messiah.

Come, and worship the Son of the living God.

Draw near to God all you who long for faith, all you who strive to live a godly life.

Draw near to God all you who believe, all you who have proved your faithfulness.

Draw near to God all you who trust in the promises of the Gospel: the good news of Jesus Christ for all.

Draw near to God. Amen.

Lord, we have heard your call as it has echoed down through the generations - through history and tradition – through Scripture and preaching – through the lives and witness of faithful people.

We have heard your call reaching out to us, as we have worshipped, as we have prayed and as we have wrestled with doubt and unbelief.

Hear us now as we call out to you in praise and prayer – in honest confession – and as we intercede for the needs of the world. Amen.

The words of 'Father, hear the prayer we offer' written by Love Maria Willis [1824-1908] StF 518

1 Father, hear the prayer we offer:

not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.

2 Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.

3 Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would strike the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.

4 Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be there at our side.

Prayer:

Living God,

We confess that our lives are not always ones of living sacrifice, but that more often we are bounded by conditions of our own making about how far we will go to live out our faith.

Forgive us for our lack of boldness.

We confess that we do not always mirror your hopes of what your church will be – that we do not accept difference or change easily – that we only want to recognise each other's gifts if they are ones we want to receive.

Forgive us for our lack of openness.

We confess that the world could be a much better place and that we could play our part in making it so. We do not challenge assumptions that injustice is inevitable and do not value the small things we can do to make a difference.

Forgive us for our lack of urgency.

God, the giver of life, we offer our lives back to you.

Forgive us, change us and renew us – for we ask it in the name of Christ. Amen.

Father God, we offer our gratitude for the gift of your Son who came as a living sacrifice, dying on the cross to give us new life.

Freed from sin, we offer ourselves to you, cleansed and transformed by the blood of your Son. Amen.

Matthew 16: 13-20 taken from The Holy Bible – The New Testament - a New Translation by William Barclay. Copyright William Barclay 1968

When Jesus had come to the districts of Caesarea Philippi, he put a question to his disciples.

'Who are people saying that the Son of Man is?' he asked. They said: 'Some are saying, John the baptiser; others, Elijah; others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.'

'And you,' he said to them, 'who do you say that I am?'

Simon Peter answered: 'You are the Messiah, the son of the living God!'

'You are indeed blessed, Simon Barjona,' Jesus said, 'for it was no human being who revealed this to you; it was my Father who is in heaven. I tell you, you are Peter – the man whose name means a rock – and upon this rock I will erect my Church, and the powers of death will be helpless to harm it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you allow on earth will be allowed in heaven.'

Jesus gave strict orders to his disciples not to tell anyone he was the Messiah.

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Son of the living God, you ask me to decide who you are:

I say you are Son of Man, my pattern for living;

I say you prophet, inspiration for the way ahead;

I say you are brother always by my side;

I say you are the anointed one, the Christ;

I say you are saviour of all. Amen.

Written by Judith Dimond – Gazing on the Gospels [year A] Copyright Judith Dimond 2010

Meditation of Andrew [taken from A Most Amazing Man Year A – Copyright 2010 Nick Fawcett

He asked two questions, almost the same – and yet so very different.

We'd had no problem with the first, for it was about *others* – what *they* thought – who *they* said he was; but then he paused, looking us straight in the eye, and put us firmly on the spot.

'What about you: who do you say that I am?'

There was no escaping it now, no hiding behind others. He wanted *our* answer, *our* response, each of *us* to decide. Would we have done so?

I don't know, for while we'd followed Jesus for months, marvelling at his deeds and drinking in his every word, we still wanted proof that he was the one we'd waited for – the deliverer our whole nation so earnestly yearned to see.

We admired him, loved him even, but we wanted to be sure before committing ourselves, to be certain beyond all shadow of doubt that he was the real thing, the answer to our prayers.

So we might have stood there all day, measuring our words before daring to speak – had not Peter waded in as usual, grasping the bull by its horns.

'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.'

And of course he was right, we all see it now, but it was Peter's faith – his willingness to take the plunge That helped to open our eyes. We'd held back, wanting the last reservation dispelled, and could so easily have missed the wonderful truth staring us in the face: that God was with us, right by our side, come at last to set us free.

I believe it now. My mind's made up, decision made.

What about you?

Prayer:

You ask us, Jesus, as you asked your disciples long ago and have asked generations since, to decide for ourselves who you are.

Help us to answer that question – not hedging our bets, as we are inclined to do – not sidestepping the issue – not hiding behind the conclusions of others, or taking refuge in cliché and jargon – but honestly coming to our own conclusions about what you have done and what you mean for us.

And, having made our response, help us to recommit to it each day, so that our faith may be ever fresh and ever real. Amen.

Close:

Something to ponder in the week ahead: Who do I say Jesus is?

Who does God say I am?

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me?

Be blessed as you go in Jesus' name.

May he be the rock on which you build,

the key you carry with you,

and the one you proclaim as your Lord and your Saviour. Amen

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