



‘Who do you say I am?’

Sunday 19th July 2020 16th in Ordinary

Rev. Nico Hilmy-Jones, Jenny Pathmarajah & Rev. Debbie Poole.

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Welcome and
The Lighting of the Candle**

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord, all you nations!
Extol him, all you peoples!
For great is His steadfast love
towards us,
And the faithfulness of the Lord
endures forever.
Praise the Lord. Amen.



Hymn 098 Your Love is Amazing

Your love is amazing,
steady and unchanging,
your love is a mountain,
firm beneath my feet.
Your love is a myst'ry,
how you gently lift me,
when I am surrounded,
your love carries me.

*Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, your love makes me sing.
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, your love makes me sing.*

Your love is surprising,
I can feel it rising,
all the joy that's growing
deep inside of me.
Ev'ry time I see you,
all your goodness shines through,
I can feel this God-song,
rising up in me.

*Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, your love makes me sing.
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, your love makes me sing.*

Yes, you make me sing.
Lord you make me sing, sing,
sing
How you make me sing.

*Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, your love makes me sing.
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, your love makes me sing.*

Brenton Brown and Brian Doerkson (born 1965)

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*Andy Green & The London Fox Singers CD Shout to the Lord: Top
100 Worship Songs, Vol. 5 2008*

Opening Prayer, by Jevd Jenny

Loving God, we praise you for your coming to us in Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord; that we see in him something of your glory, your power, your sovereignty, your authority and your love. We praise you for his life, death and resurrection, which have opened our eyes to your grace and transformed our lives by your Spirit.

We praise you for coming at all and for sharing our suffering and pain. We praise you for wanting to enrich our lives with your presence and to fill our joy with your glory.

Lord, we cannot praise you enough for all that you are and all that you have done for us.

You have given us life and hope and joy and peace. You have given us Christ, our Saviour and Lord, and in him we can begin again. We praise you for your goodness, your joy and your holiness. We praise you that no matter what we say or do you never stop loving us and seeking to bring us home to you.

We praise you for understanding us when we are at our worst and forgiving us when we least deserve it; for breaking into our darkness and for flooding our lives with the light of your Spirit. We pray that your Holy Spirit may overflow our hearts and lives with your mercy, truth and power so that our neighbours may hear the good news and experience the love of God

she abroad in their hearts and lives. We ask this in the name of Christ. Amen

MARK 8:27-38

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "***You are the Messiah.***"

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. 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. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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."

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit

their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

"Who do you think you are."

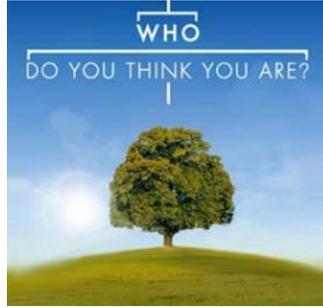
Dianne Huddleston (Bethlehem)

Who do you think you are? This is a popular TV programme which delves into the past generations of various celebrities, hoping to come up with something exciting, or, preferably, shocking in their past.

In today's Bible reading, Jesus doesn't exactly ask this question, but He asks his disciples "Who do people say I am?". This was quite an easy question for them to answer. The people of Jesus' time knew him as the carpenter from Nazareth, Mary's son, a preacher and a teacher. His disciples, who spent so much time with Him, knew that He was so much more than this. However, He went on to ask a more pointed question "And who do you say I am?" Jesus was always good at putting people on the spot! This was not so easy to answer, but Peter, who had spent so much time with Jesus and knew He was so much more than a preacher and teacher, answered "The anointed one, the Messiah"

During this lockdown, many of us, myself included, have had time to ask ourselves who we think we are. Before the pandemic disrupted our

lives, my weeks were organised into church activities, Messy Church, choir, Prayer Pastors, House Group, Grace Trust lunches - each day had its own routine, all the boxes were ticked. Suddenly, in March, all that was stripped away. It set me wondering if all these activities were what defined me as a person, or was there more to it? I have to admit, it left me feeling a bit



empty, and useless. In one of the letters about lockdown in this month's Christianity magazine, a reader writes "I have used some of my time productively, but there have been many other days when I have been in a kind of wilderness,

assessing who I am when I am not busy for the Lord!" I can certainly identify with that.

We all learned new skills, mostly to do with technology - we Zoomed, we Whatsapped, we joined Houseparty, we baked bread, we cooked more, as all the restaurants and cafes were closed. We walked, cycled, spent time in the garden and generally enjoyed being outdoors in this beautiful island. I reconnected with people I hadn't spoken to for a long time. All these things are positive outcomes, and I sincerely hope that we will hold on to these things long after Covi-19 has faded. However, none of these things are substitutes for hugging our nearest and dearest, especially those who live in the UK or further afield.

This time has taught me that we are more than what we do. I hope that if I were to ask my friends and family

who they think I am, that they would say 'a good friend', a wife, a mother, a grandmother. We have certainly had time to contemplate during this time. Will we do things differently after this lockdown is ended? Will we think differently about ourselves and others? I do hope so. Who do you think you are? All of the above, but above all, a follower of Jesus, and, as the next song says 'I am a child of God'

SoF Bk6 3216 No longer slave

You unravel me with a melody,
you surround me with a song of deliverance -
from my enemies till all my fears are gone.

*I'm no longer a slave to fear,
I am a child of God.
I'm no longer a slave to fear,
I am a child of God.*

From my mother's womb, you have chosen me, - love has called my name I've been born again, - into your family, your blood flows through my veins.

Refrain (x2)

You split the sea, so I could walk right though it; - all my fears were drowned in perfect love. - You rescued me and I will stand and sing: I am a child of God.

*(repeat)
Refrain*

Music by Zach Williams performing "No Longer Slaves" (Official Video). (C) 2018 Provident Label Group LLC, a division of Sony Music Entertainment

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDnA_coA168

Men of Valor is committed to winning men in prison to Jesus Christ and discipling them. Our purpose is to equip them to re-enter society as men of integrity – becoming givers to the community rather than takers.

A testimony and song by
Rev'd Jenny's sister Rebecca and son William

Time to Reflect

with Rev'd Nico Hilmy-Jones

I read a story about Christian Herter the Governor of Massachusetts who was running for a second term in office, who arrived at a church barbecue, late into the afternoon and he was very hungry after a long day. As he moved down the queue, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to serve the next person.

"Excuse me," Governor Herter said, "I would like to have another piece of chicken"

"Sorry," the woman told him. "I'm supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person."

Feeling rather put off that she would not give him another piece, he said: "But I'm starving, and I deserve another piece"

"Sorry," the woman said again. "Only one to a customer."

Governor Herter, thinking himself a very important man, decided that this time he would throw a little weight around, so he said with great authority: "Do you know who I am?, I am an important man, I am the Governor of this state!" She looked him up and down and then responded with:

"Do you know who I am?, I'm the lady in charge of the chicken. Now move along."

This story brings us into the heart of the Gospel lesson where Jesus asks the question: Who do you say I am? It was a critical time in Jesus' relationship with his closest followers and he wants to know who people think he is. As we read, there are different answers, different assumptions that people have made about Jesus and so the Disciples begin to repeat to Jesus what they had heard people saying about Him.: "Some say you are John the Baptist. Some say You are Elijah. Some say You are another of the prophets and God has sent You to us as he sent Isaiah and Jeremiah". Jesus turns to them and asks the question directly to them,

saying in verse 29: But what about you, Who do you say I am? He is essentially saying: "Never mind what others say. You have been with Me this whole time, do you know what you are seeing? Do you know who you are walking with? Do you know who I am?" And Peter answers, "You are the Messiah.", but Jesus wants to know if Peter really understand what that actually means? He now begins to clarify what it means to be the Messiah, in this world, because Peter and the Disciples still interpreted who Jesus is based on their own assumptions of who the Messiah was meant to be. Their understanding is that Jesus was a warrior who would fight and free them from the oppression of the Roman authorities, the one whom everyone was waiting for. However, Jesus says the opposite, and a far more revolutionary image emerges. He speaks about his passion, his death and his resurrection. He tells them he will be despised and rejected, suffer for them and he will walk to Jerusalem, to the cross and to his death. Peter doesn't want to hear this and rejects what Jesus is saying to them. Jesus, however, is trying to show Peter that he is only seeing God through the eyes of the world; he hasn't learned yet to see the world through the eyes of God. He says to Peter that as much as you want me to avoid what needs to happen, I have to do this, it has to happen; it has to be this way.

Many years ago I was a Youth Minister of a small church in Maryland, in the United States. There were 5 faithful teenagers who kept coming back week to week joining in Sunday night activities. As my first summer with them drew near I researched possible community service projects they could participate in. I came upon this interesting project in North Carolina, that offered youth groups a chance to work with impoverished families. So off we went, arriving in North

Carolina some 12 hours later, in a small van filled with 5 nervous and expectant teenagers, 1 parent and 1 youth minister. We were a tiny youth group next to some of the other churches as most of them had anywhere between 30-50 members present in their group. At first my youth group were overwhelmed, as we stood out like a sore thumb-different accents, different backgrounds, dwarfed by the other huge youth groups present. We were all unsure on how we could make a difference. That week we divided up into little groups and we changed the lives of those less privileged than us. but it was a life changing experience for us as well. We took a physical risk on being in unfamiliar territory and having to learn how to tar a roof or build stairs. But, the big risk was in how it was going to change us as people. We took the risk that we were going to come back totally different. We gained an understanding of the world around us. We gained an understanding of the world that Jesus very purposefully lived in himself and calls all of us to live in, as well. The gift of walking out of our comfort zones. We learned that sometimes we pack our bags, and leave the familiar and when we let go of our fears and enter into the unknown, we are changed and made new. When we take the step away from what we know and what we understand, we need to know what that means and we need to commit ourselves to the journey. What Jesus is teaching Peter and the Disciples is that to be a follower of Jesus you need to take risks and leave behind what you know and what is safe.

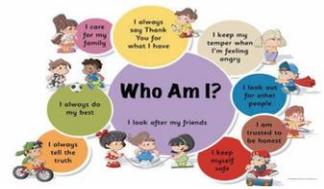
Jesus says in verses 34-35: Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. To follow Jesus, to

walk the way of God, would be scary but they would have to take up crosses of their own, like the one he would bear on his way to die on the cross. It would be hard work, it would mean moving out from their own comfort zones. But what they would gain would be living a life with God. That is the nature of “who Jesus is.” That is what it means to know him as the Messiah. We are embarking into a new somewhat unfamiliar world and a new way of being Church. What have we learned during our time away from our local Church communities? What have we done differently and what can we now develop and build upon? We have had to do new things, work in new teams, work in unfamiliar circumstances, learn new skills and discover new gifts and graces. Now I know that taking risks can be frightening and we have been forced to take them and it is easy to stay put and not try. Perhaps you would rather stay home and not go back to Church? Perhaps you would like to do the same kind of Worship as before because that’s what you know? Or, perhaps, this is a chance to do different things, to see differently, to experience Church and your faith differently? This is what we are facing as a Circuit right now.

So, what does denying ourselves and taking up our crosses and following Jesus mean for us? God wants to know if we’re ready to move away from our safe places, if we’re ready to walk out boldly and embrace our faith fully, if we are going to choose things on the basis of what is convenient and easy and self-serving or on the basis of what is right and good and loving. He wants us to lose self, to let go of the ego, to put ourselves aside for the sake of others. He wants us to live the way of sacrifice and unselfishness. He wants us to put God, not ourselves, at the centre of life. I believe this reading is challenging us, right now, at this

moment in time, to not look back but to look forward and see what we can become as followers, as Churches, as new people who have been given the gift of doing something different. But, maybe, we like to retreat into the comfort of what we know and do so well, as opposed to being challenged to grow and to follow. Maybe we like to look back instead of looking forward. Maybe we feel we can not love in the same way that God loves us and we can not live in the same way. And then suddenly when we think our faith is not enough, when we think we can never live up to God’s expectations, we can’t be true followers, Jesus comes down to our level, he comes to our place, our situation, our context and he says: ‘follow me’.

Our reading challenges us to change ourselves and own our faith. When that change has taken place and we start to adjust our priorities so that they align with God’s, then we will find



ourselves in the Kingdom. When we allow ourselves to take the life-changing risks like his early followers did and live by the way of the Cross, we are set free. Venturing out into a new way of living, a new way of being Church can be scary but it can also be life changing. Because if we don’t take up that cross, there is only so far we will be able to follow Jesus, only so far he can travel with us, only so far, before our paths must part. As we move back into our Churches, in an uncertain world, after discovering new ways of living and worshipping, we need to make a choice and decide what kind of followers we want to be.

So I leave you with this question: *‘Who do you say Jesus is?’* AMEN.

STF 673 Will you come and follow me

- 1 Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown,
in you and you in me?
- 2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?
- 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and
sound - in you and you in me?



- 5 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

John L. Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019)
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Sourced from YouTube
St. Andrews Metropolitan Cathedral, Glasgow
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk6lUaUJ3sk>

Prayers of Intercession

Rev'd Jenny Pathmarajah

Let us pray.....

Think of someone who is suffering; someone whose whole life had been damaged by the words and deeds of someone else; someone who is filled with resentment because of what they have suffered; someone who suffers still, through no fault of their own. *May the hope of God be with them now.*

Think of someone who is suffering; someone whose whole life has been changed by war; someone who has been taught to hate others not the same as themselves; someone whose attitudes and values are crippling life for themselves and those around them. *May Christ be their peace.*

Think of someone who is suffering; someone who has been dominated by others, made to feel as if they did not count; someone made to feel unworthy, unloved or unvalued; someone trying to relearn the meaning and value they have as a person. *May the affirming love of Christ be their teacher and friend*

Think of someone who is suffering; someone who always felt they knew what life was about; someone for whom work, relationships and the future seemed so secure; someone who now feels rejected, unwanted, unnecessary and afraid; someone who is finding each day hard to fill. *May the strength of God hold them.*

Think of someone who is suffering; someone who was always fit and will but is now facing a terminal illness; someone caring for those they love; someone with a past that now haunts them an uncertain future and a today they can't face. *May the mercy of God enter into their fear.*

Think of someone who is suffering;
someone imprisoned for their or
standing up for what they know is the
truth; someone locked in by disability
and a society that is blind to their
needs; someone locked out by their lack
of education or their colour or skin;
someone locked up in the poverty trap.
*May Christ be the key to their being
free.*

Think of someone who is suffering
Think of yourself - of the hurt that is in
your own heart and mind.
Think of the affection you long to
receive. Think of your hopes that came
to nothing. Think of your pain that no
one knows. Think of the joy, love,
thanks and peace that have always
sustained you. Think of the person you
always wanted to be.
May the love of Christ be in you now.

Hymn: STF 367 When I was lost

When I was lost,
You came and rescued me;
reached down into the pit
and lifted me. O Lord, such love,
I was as far from You
as I could be.
You know all the things
I've ever done,
but Jesus' blood has cancelled every
one. O Lord, such grace
to qualify me as Your own.

*There is a new song in my mouth,
there is a deep cry in my heart,
a hymn of praise to Almighty God
hallelujah!*
*And now I stand firm on this Rock, my
life is hidden now with Christ in God.
The old has gone and the new has come
hallelujah! - Your love has lifted me.*

Now I have come into Your family, -
for the Son of God has died for me.
O Lord, such peace,
I am as loved by You as I could be. In
the full assurance of Your love, now
with every confidence we come. O
Lord, such joy
to know that You delight in us.

*Many are the wonders You have done, -
And many are the things
that You have planned.
How beautiful the grace that gives to us
All that we don't deserve,
All that we cannot earn,
But is a gift of love.*

Kate & Miles Simmonds
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Performed at the spires concert hall Belfast in
December 2008 for New Irish Arts Ireland in
Christmas Praise concert
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7ZcN3mMC6Q>

A Celtic Prayer of Blessing **Revd Debbie Poole**

May the Road rise up to meet you
May the wind be ever at your back -
May the sun shine warm upon your
face - And the rain fall soft upon
your fields - And until we meet again
May God Bless you and hold you in
the palm of His hand.

Join us for Coffee & Chat,
on the phone by dialing

02203 481 5240

Meeting ID: **878 0011 0669 #**

Participants ID: #

Password: **336542 #**

