

But who do you say that I am?

Sunday August 23rd 2020

Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Let us praise the Lord, The Lord's name be praised.

Hymn 342 – [All hail the power of Jesu's name!](#)

Let angels prostrate fall; bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all.

Prayers

Thank you God for the light of this new day. For the sunlight and for the light of Christ. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ, the Messiah, our Saviour, our brother, our friend – friend of all sinners. Thank you that you know us better than we know ourselves – and you love us and want us to be free to have life in all its fullness. So we pray to you as the only one who can set us free from the power of sin, remove the paralysing effects of guilt and shame, and give us strength to forgive others.

O God, we confess the blindness that is not even aware of sinning;

the pride that dares not admit that it is wrong;

the selfishness that can see nothing but its own will;

the righteousness that knows no fault;

the callousness that has ceased to care;

the defiance that does not regret its own sins;

the evasion that always tries to make excuses;

the coldness of heart that is too hardened to repent.

God, we are sinners; be merciful to us.

Almighty God have mercy on us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Introduction to the theme:

Today we are thinking about the identity of Jesus – who do we say that he is? And also our own identity. Who do we think we are? Who are we in Jesus' eyes? What names does Jesus have – and what names are we called?

Here is a word-search. See if you can search out **18 names of Jesus** – and then think about what they mean.

R	A	B	B	O	N	I	S	P	C
S	A	W	R	B	A	T	H	R	R
V	I	N	E	H	S	L	E	O	E
M	E	S	S	I	A	H	P	P	T
P	T	D	R	O	W	E	H	H	S
E	G	H	A	O	M	A	E	E	A
R	C	K	L	M	S	D	R	T	M
G	O	N	O	E	E	L	D	V	O
M	O	O	R	G	E	D	I	R	B
S	L	D	D	A	K	I	N	G	P

Hymn 357 – [Jesus – the name high over all](#)

Gospel reading: [Matthew 16:13-20](#)

Thoughts: Who do you say that I am?

Names are important. We like people to get our name right – we don't like people calling us names. Sometimes history has given a name to a person to sum up their character and their actions e.g. Alexander the Great or William the Conqueror. Some Biblical characters had 'nicknames' e.g. Simon the Zealot, John the Baptist, or Simon who was called Peter – the ROCK.

Today we are looking at the names of Jesus. Who do the people say that I am? Who do you say that I am? Here are some answers:

Jesus: This was a name in common use but it also had special meaning for early followers with its Hebrew origin from Joshua and Jehoshua meaning 'Jehovah is my help' or 'Jehovah is salvation'. If we look in Acts we find the disciples healing in the name of Jesus and the Jewish authorities getting very hot under the collar: In Acts 4 Peter and John healed the lame man saying: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – get up and walk. After they were arrested they were questioned by the Jewish leaders: 'What power have you got or whose name did you use?' The disciples answer that the man was healed through the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – and the leaders sent them off warning them strictly not to speak to anyone in the name of Jesus.

Messiah: What did Peter mean when he said 'You are the Messiah'?

We use the name Messiah and its Greek equivalent 'Christ' often without too much thought to their meaning. Christ to some is almost like Jesus' surname! But the name 'Messiah' would have had immense depth of meaning for Peter and the disciples. Messiah is a Hebrew name meaning 'the anointed one'. The Messiah was to be prophet, priest and king - the three offices to which people were anointed in Old Testament times. The Messiah was also 'the one who is to come' and save Israel.

During Jesus' life he was not universally acclaimed to be the promised Messiah – and some people think Jesus never claimed this name for himself. He certainly didn't encourage the disciples to spread it around. The gospel narratives lead to the conclusion that while Jesus was seen by many as The Christ, and was in fact crucified for this claim, Jesus wanted to avoid any popular uprising on his behalf. So he did not make any open claim to Messiahship until he had demonstrated that the Messiah was one who would befriend sinners not destroy them, and one who would suffer and die in disgrace to conquer sin and death rather than seizing power by human means. Jesus was more interested in saving sinners than defining his own status!

But who do you say that I am? What do you say when talking to those who ask you about your faith in Jesus? What names of Jesus are most precious to you? My favourite name for Jesus is 'friend of sinners'. Religious people complained because they saw Jesus as 'a friend of tax collectors and "sinners" ' (Luke 7:34). The Pharisees considered it a terrible condemnation and yet Jesus accepted the description as a true definition of his ministry (Luke 5:29-32). Perhaps 'friend' seemed too familiar a title to the disciples and early Christians - but it has become a title precious to modern Christians who see Jesus as the one who laid down his life for his friends (John 15:13). Our best friends are those who accept us as we are, who stick by us when others turn their backs, and who give up their own time and resources to help us when we need it most. Jesus is an even better friend because he is always there, has infinitely more power to help us and is the friend of the friendless. 'Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? In his arms he'll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there'.

Hymn 531 – [What a friend we have in Jesus](#)

Intercessions:

God, most gracious and most holy, grant us the help of your Spirit as we pray for the Church and the world.

We pray for the church in every land...

For the North Kirklees and Morley Circuit and other local churches...

That we may worship and serve you with reverence and joy.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for the peoples of the world...

For the leaders of the nations...

That all may work together for justice and peace.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those who are ill or distressed...

For the lonely and the bereaved...

And for those in any other need or trouble...

That they may be comforted and sustained.

Lord hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father, we remember before you all your servants who have died in the faith of Christ... We pray that we too may lead faithful and godly lives in this world, and finally share with all the saints in everlasting joy;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer**Hymn 673 – [Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?](#)**

May the Lord bless us and keep us, and make us shine with that blessing so we may be a blessing to others.

Amen.