

Who do you say Jesus is?

I'm going to break from my usual "lecturnal" style of preaching for a bit this morning. The conversation between Jesus and Peter in today's gospel begs some reflection – and not just from me. Jesus is trying to measure the temperature of the culture as he continues to move toward Jerusalem. Peter answers his question with some amazing titles – so amazing, that Jesus promises that this testimony will be the rock on which the church will be built.

That begs the question. Who do you say Jesus is?

As you ponder this, remember – there's no judgment here. Be honest. It's okay.

Now, please get together with one or two others and share your answer. Just remember to come back when I call you! (You all can get so distracted!)

[Time for reflection and discussion.]

Now that you have answered the question, I want you to think about how your answer reflects on you. How much of your own desires or personalities are incorporated (and I use that word intentionally) into the titles or answer you gave to the question?

Simon Peter's answer, Jesus implies, came directly from divine inspiration. But, perhaps there was something more. Perhaps the divine inspiration came as an answer to prayer. Perhaps Simon needed a rock to stand on himself.

For me, the first thing title that comes to mind is that Jesus is my brother:
my BIG brother.

I'm sure that answer is rooted in some primordial need of mine to have a male figure to look up to, someone who loves me for me. I also know that in some way, I've found that accessing God through flesh and blood is crucial to my understanding of God. It would not be the same to worship some ethereal being that had no idea what it's like to be down here. To go through puberty, to be betrayed, to struggle with a parental figure – Jesus did all that. His experience makes my experience legitimate and holy.

Throughout the stages of my life, my relationship with Jesus has changed.

Sometimes he takes the brunt of my anger and frustration. Sometimes he asks me to believe things that are just weird. Walking on water, healing blind people, resurrection from the dead. Yet, I trust my big brother, and so I take those beliefs to heart.

Using that title makes Jesus real for me. It points up the need I have for a strong, experienced, loving presence in my life – a presence that no human being is capable of providing.

This week, reflect on who you say Jesus is. And then, reflect on what that testimony says about you.

Amen.