

Note: Bishop Matthew Gunter preached at St. Luke's this past Sunday. We do not have a copy of his sermon. The following devotional is based on last Sunday's gospel lesson from St. Mark.

WHO ARE YOU?

“Who do people say that I am? . . . But who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:27, 29). Jesus' questions to the disciples highlight a distinction between what society at large recognizes about him, and what those closest to him know. From the outside, Jesus looks to many people like an important prophet or great moral teacher at best; at worst, he is an irrelevant rule-giver.

To those who know him, though, the answer is different. We who have been baptized into his family and nourished with his body and blood, we who hear his voice in the words of absolution and the promises of scripture, we who have felt his healing power through the gift of the Holy Spirit know just a bit more. This Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. Like Peter, even we who know the story may wish to reject the necessity of Christ's death. The words of the beloved Holy Week hymn echo deeply, *“Oh, who am I that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh and die?”*

Who are you? You are a sinner in need of redemption, the one for whom Christ has died, a beloved child of God, and a sibling of your Messiah. Jesus rebukes Peter not for Peter's compassion or desire for Jesus to avoid suffering, but because the compassion and desire are misplaced. We need a Messiah—and we have one—precisely because we don't need any more prophets, moral teachers, or irrelevant rule-givers. We are sinners who need forgiveness. We are broken people in need of healing. And we have found what we need in Jesus, the Messiah. The world will always set its mind on human things; may the Holy Spirit set your mind on divine things and continue to confirm in you the truth of Jesus Christ, who was crucified, died, and raised on the third day for you.

Copyright © 2021 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.