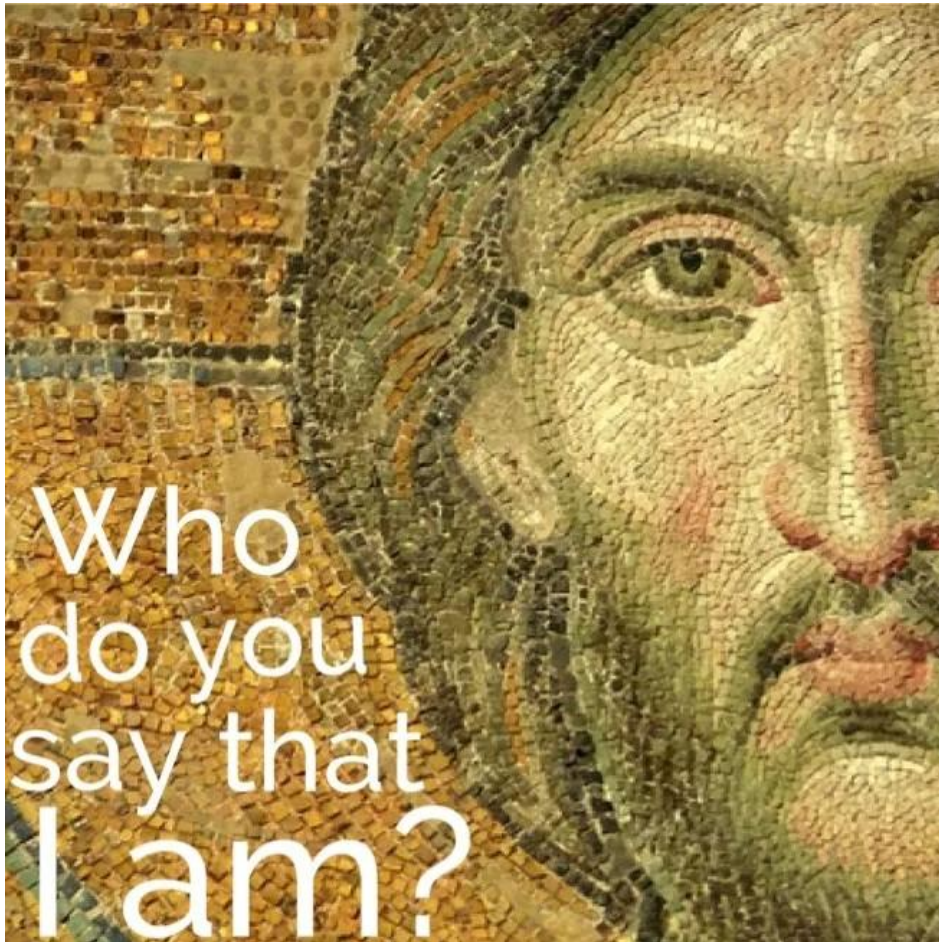


Who do you say that I am

By Revd Philip Smith



It's not easy preparing sermons, or reflections as I like to call them. When I know that I am preaching, I read the passages, pray, then dwell on them and wait to see what comes to mind in the weeks before. Because it hasn't been my custom to follow the lectionary religiously, I often struggle with it especially if the Gospel Reading is narrative and therefore often descriptive. But I pray and relax.

I relax because when I was a teacher, I was expected to convey knowledge to my students and they then got tested. It's quantifiable. But in preaching we are sharing God's thoughts to our listeners hearts, so anything can happen. It's why I often pray, 'May my words be forgotten and God's remembered.'

I smiled when I saw this Sunday's readings, as it is a preacher's dream, for it includes two questions that can be asked to anyone in any generation.

Firstly 'Who do other people say Jesus is? I actually get the opportunity to ask this question in a slightly different way when I talk to people who request the church to baptise their children.

I say that I have 3 questions and afterwards I will tell them why I asked them. 'Do you believe in God? Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? The reason is that these three

questions are asked of everyone at the baptism service. I get a good spread of yes, no, not sure. I recently got 'I believe Jesus was a good man.'

I expect if I asked the general public, I would get a range of answers that include: He's a myth or he never existed.

As Christians. Church goers, and believers, who do we say Jesus is?

CS Lewis wrote: *You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*"

Would we say with Peter, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

I often imagine Peter and Jesus in conversation.

Peter: Jesus

Jesus: 'this better be good Peter'

Peter: What does God want me to do?

Jesus: what part of act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with me, don't you understand?

Peter; 'Don't you mean walk humbly with God?

Jesus: that's what I said!

Who do I say Jesus is? He is God and God is Jesus, and Jesus is The Spirit, and The Spirit is God! For me everything is a load of noble codswallop compared to knowing Jesus, to paraphrase the Apostle Paul. Philippians 3:8

Who do you say, Jesus is? Discuss.

Keep the faith, but never ever to ourselves.

Love Philip x