



## Theme: Who do people say I am?

A service of worship to guide reflections on Sunday 23 August 2020

### Call to Worship

When Jesus asked, Simon Peter answered: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God".

Let us make the same bold answer, and let us come together to worship Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

In this way we begin our worship with the song:

#### **Songs of Fellowship 298**

Jesus, name above all names  
Beautiful Saviour, Glorious Lord  
Emmanuel, God is with us  
Blessed Redeemer, Living Word

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*Hilary Davies, 1988*

## Reading: Psalm 138 GNB - A Prayer of Thanksgiving

- <sup>1</sup> I thank you, Lord, with all my heart;  
I sing praise to you before the gods.
- <sup>2</sup> I face your holy Temple,  
bow down, and praise your name  
because of your constant love and faithfulness,  
because you have shown that your name  
and your commands are supreme.
- <sup>3</sup> You answered me when I called to you;  
with your strength you strengthened me.
- <sup>4</sup> All the kings in the world will praise you, Lord,  
because they have heard your promises.
- <sup>5</sup> They will sing about what you have done  
and about your great glory.
- <sup>6</sup> Even though you are so high above,  
you care for the lowly,  
and the proud cannot hide from you.
- <sup>7</sup> When I am surrounded by troubles,  
you keep me safe.  
You oppose my angry enemies  
and save me by your power.
- <sup>8</sup> You will do everything you have promised;  
Lord, your love is eternal.  
Complete the work that you have begun.

### Our Response

Lord, do we really believe the words of the Psalmist, that we are in the presence of the Son of the living God?

Still our hearts now, so that we may truly appreciate who you are.

As we hear these words of power, we bow down before you and praise you.

Lord thank you that you are always ready to forgive me when I trust you enough to confess my sins to you

Even when I feel I don't deserve it

Be merciful to me O God.

## **Singing the Faith 424** confirms God's forgiveness

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name.  
I've been born again in Jesus' name  
And in Jesus' name I come to you  
To share his love as he told me to.  
He said 'Freely, freely you have received, freely, freely give.  
Go in my name, and because you believe others will know that I  
live.

All pow'r is giv'n in Jesus' name  
In earth and heav'n in Jesus name  
And in Jesus' name I come to you  
To share his pow'r as he told me to.  
He said 'Freely, freely you have received, freely, freely give.  
Go in my name, and because you believe others will know that I  
live.

God gives us life in Jesus' name  
He lives in us in Jesus' name  
And in Jesus' name I come to you  
To share his peace as he told me to.

*Carol Owens b.1931*

### **Reading: Matthew Chapter 16: v 13 – 20 (GNB) Peter's declaration about Jesus**

<sup>13</sup> Jesus went to the territory near the town of Caesarea Philippi, where he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

<sup>14</sup> "Some say John the Baptist," they answered. "Others say Elijah, while others say Jeremiah or some other prophet."

<sup>15</sup> "What about you?" he asked them. "Who do you say I am?"

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

<sup>17</sup> "Good for you, Simon son of John!" answered Jesus. "For this truth did not come to you from any human being, but it was given to you directly by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And so I tell you, Peter:

you are a rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.”

<sup>20</sup> Then Jesus ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

## **Reflection on the Word**

After years of ministry in Israel, Jesus sent His disciples to circulate among the crowds in Caesarea Philippi (CP) and listen to what people were saying about him. The people were reported to be full of praise for Jesus and identified him with some Old Testament great. CP, however, was a Greco-Roman worship centre with temples to various gods. It is when confronted by the variety of worship styles and temples – a riot of noise, colour and chaos – that Jesus asks the disciples the all-important question “Who do people say I am? ”

Just before this story Jesus had cautioned his disciples about the Jewish leaders themselves, Pharisees & Sadducees. Now they are in the religious melting pot of pagan cults – for Jewish disciples, a shocking place. And yet it is in this murky confusing cauldron that Peter responds in a new way to Jesus. People say all sorts of things but Peter recognises Jesus for who He is.

So the people were full of praise for Jesus but it was faint praise. Faint praise indeed. It’s as if you or I looked at a portrait by Rembrandt or Leonardo da Vinci and commented “Oh, it’s a nice picture.”

Faint praise and lukewarm support are almost worse than the open hostility of the religious leaders of the day. And it’s often the same today. “Oh, Jesus is alright. He was a good man - a wonderful teacher. There’s a lot we can learn from Jesus – too bad he was crucified and died before his time.”

People can respect Jesus as a good person, but God calls us to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Anything less than worshipping Him as Son of God is to reject Him.

So back to CP. Jesus did not send out His disciples because He was curious about what the crowds thought. He sent them out to listen so that they would be forced to make a decisive personal decision. You see it doesn't matter what other people say about Jesus. It doesn't matter if our parents, children, friends or our whole family are Christians, or indeed if they are not. Each one of us must answer for ourselves the question Jesus asked His followers then and asks us today; "Who do you say that I am?"

If we say with Peter "You are the Christ, Son of the living God", and thus trust ourselves to His care, we experience salvation and pass from death to life. If, however, we side with the crowd, no matter how much we may approve of Jesus as a moral and spiritual leader, we are lost.

Simon Peter as he is also known was originally called Simon, a name which means 'to hear'. Simon heard the truth of Jesus and was given the new name Peter, 'the rock' and on this rock I will build my church says Jesus. Many therefore believe that Peter was the first Pope and that's fine by me. Jesus also gave him the keys of the Kingdom, a privilege and a responsibility. Receiving the keys to the door of a house is something of a rite of passage. It's not so common these days but houses large and small have been known to pass down through families from generation to generation. Owners of large estates have significant responsibilities associated with their property – the upkeep of the bricks and mortar and often the care and employment of staff and workers. Downton Abbey is a good example of such issues.

Jesus hands the responsibility of opening access to God, to the Church. The keys which are handed down give the Church permission to innovate, to unlock doors that were firmly closed and show just how far the mercy of God will stretch when given the chance.

Think about the keys you have on you now – house, car, church perhaps. With these keys we can physically welcome others into our homes, provide transport for those without and enable many to benefit from the facilities of the church building. OK so access to homes, cars and Christchurch are not a reality at present – they will be! The keys held by Peter though are not physical but very much spiritual.

Spiritually, we who say “You are the Christ, Son of the living God” are custodians of the keys to the Kingdom and through our thoughts words and actions on a daily basis we form part of the rock on which God’s church is built. The keys are a privilege, a responsibility and a challenge to us all in our daily walk with Jesus, Son of the living God. Amen.

### **Singing the Faith 357**

- 1 Jesus, the name high over all,  
In hell, or earth, or sky:  
Angels and men before it fall,  
And devils fear and fly.
- 2 Jesus, the name to sinners dear,  
The name to sinners giv’n;  
It scatters all their guilty fear,  
It brings them peace of heav’n.
- 3 Jesus the prisoner’s fetters breaks,  
And bruises Satan’s head;  
Pow’r into strengthless souls He speaks,  
And life into the dead.
- 4 Oh, that the world might taste and see,  
The riches of His grace!  
The arms of love that compass me,  
Would all mankind embrace.

- 5 Him as my righteousness I show,  
His saving truth proclaim:  
'Tis all my business here below,  
To cry, Behold the Lamb!
- 6 Happy, if with my latest breath  
I may but gasp His name:  
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,  
"Behold, behold the Lamb!"

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

### **Prayers of Intercession as we think of others**

God of all creation, we pray for your world,  
broken as it is by human greed and selfishness,  
by pride, by the failure of people to heed your call for peace with  
justice,  
and by the actions of those who believe that they know your will.  
Bring your love to the hearts and minds of all in leadership, in  
state and in church,  
and in all your world where power and influence is exercised  
and where human beings damage your creation;  
that your just and perfect rule may hold sway and that your  
kingdom may come on earth  
in the hearts and minds and lives of people;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

As always, in Jesus name we pray:

Our Father in heaven, may your holy name be honoured;  
may your Kingdom come; may your will be done on earth as it is  
in heaven.

Give us today the food we need.

Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs  
that others have done to us. Save us from the time of trial; and  
keep us safe from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

**Amen**

## **Singing the Faith 356**

Jesus shall take the highest honour  
Jesus shall take the highest praise  
Let all earth join heaven in exalting  
The Name which is above all other names  
Let's bow the knee in humble adoration  
For at His Name every knee must bow  
Let every tongue confess He is Christ  
God's only Son  
Sovereign Lord we give You glory now

For all honour and blessing and power  
Belongs to You, belongs to You  
All honour and blessing and power  
Belongs to You, belongs to You  
Lord Jesus Christ Son of the Living God

*Christopher Bowater b. 1947*

## **Blessing**

Be blessed as you go in Jesus' name.  
May he be the rock on which you build,  
the key you carry with you,  
and the one you proclaim as your Lord, and your Saviour.

**Amen.**

*Service prepared by Christine and Philip Gibson drawing on Singing the Faith and Songs of Fellowship, CCLI 5560 (reproduced with permission) and © Roots for Churches Ltd. ([www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com)).*