

Pentecost 17(B)

- 1. Jesus has been teaching and healing throughout Galilee and even in the border regions, as we heard last week.**
 - a. It has been a season of large crowds and dramatic miracles
 - b. We could easily imagine that this ministry would only grow and grow – perhaps this was what his disciples expected.
 - c. Here, at the height of his popularity, Jesus asks an unexpected question: who do people say that I am?
 - d. And with his, the character of the story changes
- 2. Over the past few Sundays, the theme from Mark's gospel has been around the question of the identity and purpose of Jesus and the community gathered around Jesus**
 - a. I've mentioned how life with Jesus is concerned more with widen circles of participation rather than drawing strict boundaries around insiders and outsiders
 - b. Last week, Jesus crosses boundaries of social and political significance to bring healing to strangers, outsiders to his movement.
 - c. The people seeing all of this are captivated: he does everything well, that acclaim.
- 3. Who do people say that I am?**
 - a. Of all the responses, it is, famously, Peter who both gets it profoundly right before he gets it profoundly wrong – Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, yes, but this is a success story not one shaped by imminent death.
 - b. Take up your cross and follow me, Jesus says after he corrects Peter. Deny yourself, lose your life to find it. This is the way of the Messiah. And this is the way of the community gathered around the Messiah.
- 4. This mic drop moment remains one of the defining moments in Mark's gospel, as indeed, it remains a defining reshaping of what life with God is all about.**
 - a. Turns out, it's not just the people we think of as ill who need healing - we all need healing
 - b. Turns out, despite living comfortable lives we all need the freedom from the guilt and shame that evil brings into our lives
 - c. Turns out, the way of healing and freedom is through the very body of Jesus, his broken, bruised, and rejected body.
 - d. It's all just smoke and mirrors otherwise, it's all fantasy and convenient lies we tell ourselves otherwise

- e. What Jesus is about is the healing and restoration of all creation – and the powers and principalities will fight tooth and nail to stop it.

5. I'm not sure what motivated you to come to church this morning, but the healing and restoration of all creation might not have been the first reason

- a. But here we are, and this is what Jesus is all about – it's his why, his identity and purpose as God's intervention into our human existence.
- b. And it's a lot to take in especially if we prefer a different Messiah than the one Jesus says he is.
- c. If this is the Jesus Way – the way of the cross, as he calls it.
- d. It asks of us: ***if we are to be a community shaped by the crucified and living Jesus, then what does it mean for us to be a community of healing and restoration.***

6. Conclusion: If we don't have a response, that's not a failure, it's an invitation

- a. We can take heart that Peter didn't have it all figured out either – in fact, none of the disciples do in Mark's gospel. It will be a pagan, a Roman centurion, who at the crucifixion will be the only one to understand who Jesus is.
- b. I wonder how Jesus' invitation to join him and follow him is being felt among us today? I wonder what is stirring in you that might be the Holy Spirit nudging you towards action.