

“Who am I?”

According to many movies, the doc will ask you just this question after a nasty knock on the head. Who am I? Who are you? These are basic tests of reality, checks on how your mind is working.

In the scripture we read today, Jesus asks his disciples the first question “Who do you say that I am?” which by necessity implies a second equally important question “Who, then, are you?”

Jesus’ question appears to come out of the blue:. It is a simple question and having traveled together for a while, they knew quite a bit. Jesus was a healer; they had seen the healing of a leper and the miraculous healing of a blind man.

Then there was the story of the 5 loaves and 2 fish, where a huge crowd was fed and satisfied. So they also knew Jesus as a great provider.

He clearly was powerful – they had seen him command the wind and the waves to be at peace and demons to flee and release their victims.

They knew that children were drawn to him and the religious leaders couldn’t better him in an argument. He spent a lot of time in prayer.

They knew Jesus as a teacher – lots and lots of teachings. Wise, learned teachings like “the sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” and that the real obstacle to righteous living is not what you eat, but a heart that is closed to love.

There were a couple of episodes that they couldn’t explain – like that time he taught we should love our enemies, and that time he healed that hated foreigner.

What did it all add up to? What should they answer to his simple question “Who do people say that I am?” Their answers were all over the place: Elijah and Jeremiah: prophets more than 700 years old. Or even John the Baptist – who was already dead. Picture them as school children who eagerly desire to get it right.

But Jesus won’t leave it there. What about YOU? What are you thinking? Forget about what others are saying, what do YOU think? When you add up all the parts, where are you? Where do you stand?

That’s the real question for us today. Who is Jesus to you? A healer? Provider of earthly needs? Magician? Wise? Holy? Does Jesus have anything to teach us about immigration

policy or economic decisions or justice for others? Where is Jesus when you pay your taxes or raise your children?

It is possible to know a great deal **about** Jesus without really knowing who Jesus is.

Some folks think of Jesus as a specialist in holy things and impossible causes – good for healing, and on special occasions. When honest, some folks would say he was far away and not concerned; some would mark him a fraud. Is Jesus just ‘a really smart guy you knew long ago’?

Then there are those who see Jesus as a convenient resource to make life more rewarding and easier all around? Or maybe Jesus is a VIP pass to heavenly places that you keep in your back pocket for emergencies. This makes Jesus no more than a talisman, a good luck charm.

But there is another possibility: Jesus as a part of your inner circle, close to your heart and a voice in your head. What Jesus has done, and what Jesus teaches may not always be clear – but they are always important.

What about Jesus has changed the way you think about things? The way you do things? Does Jesus have anything to teach us about immigration policy or economic decisions or justice for others? Where is Jesus when you pay your taxes or raise your children? Has he shifted the course of your day? Or your life? Just exactly who is Jesus to you?

Which, in the end, is to ask the question, Who exactly are you? To know who Jesus is is to know who you are.

Because, of course, as Jesus turns to his followers – those gathered on that hillside and those gathered around him today – he is asking not what you know in your head.....he is asking you what you know in your heart. What does your heart tell you about this holy man named Jesus? Even when your brain is uncertain, where is your heart committed? Jesus is asking YOU Who do you say that I am?

Peter blurts out the perfect answer, You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God! It is a profession that comes out of the blue – it surprises us right here in the middle of the story, probably as much as Peter was surprised when he said it.

It was also a life changing answer. Within moments Simon became Peter. He was no longer a fisherman; he was now a rock - the lead player in God’s plan for the future.

By knowing who Jesus is, Peter learned who Peter was. Jesus was The Anointed. One. Peter had become the proclaimer.

Many the time facing a difficult question I wished that I had managed a perfect answer like Peter's.

But more often I have desired to have the certainty of Peter's heart – a gift of the Holy Spirit that navigates all the dangerous waters of human life. I have desired Peter's deep seated, life changing knowledge of Jesus as the Anointed One

because then I would forever know myself as one of the beloved ones

To live rooted in that answer is to live eternally. May it be so for you.