

Reflections for 12th September 2021

15th Sunday after Trinity

Who do you say I am?

People talked about Jesus – they talked about him a lot. As news about him spread among the people, there were various stories and rumours about what he was saying and doing, and about who he was.

In this week's gospel reading, we are told that one day when Jesus was on the road with his disciples, he asked them what people were saying about him – 'Who do people say I am?' And they replied that some people were saying that he was John the Baptist come back to life, while others thought that he was the prophet Elijah come back to life, or one of the other prophets.

Then Jesus asked them a slightly different, and much more significant question – 'But what about you? Who do you say I am?' And it was Peter, the disciple who often spoke up first, and spoke his mind, who said, 'You are the Messiah' – you are God's chosen anointed one. This is a key moment in the gospel story, the first time that one of the disciples said directly that they believed Jesus to be the Messiah.

It is from that point onwards, perhaps in response to that declaration of faith, that Jesus began to teach them clearly that his calling was to be given up to suffer and to die. And he began to call them, and us, and all people, to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him, and to embrace the mystery at the heart of the gospel:

For those who want to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. (Mark 8. 35)

Revd John Waller

O Christ, the Master Carpenter
who, at the last, through wood and nails,
purchased our whole salvation.
Wield well your tools
in the workshop of your world,
so that we,
who come rough-hewn to your bench,
may here be fashioned
to a truer beauty of your hand.
We ask it for your own name's sake. Amen.

Bible readings: Isaiah 50. 4-9a; James 3. 1-12; Mark 8. 27-38

Story: 'Dying to Live' (the story of Good Friday, based on the gospel accounts)