

“Who Do You Say That I Am?”

I. Introduction: “Who do you say that I am?”

Jesus was Jewish. His ministry was primarily focused upon the Jewish nation. His followers were for the most part Jewish, and he revered and observed Jewish practices. Yet today, at the conclusion of the passion gospel from Mark, it was not a Jew who affirmed that Jesus is the Son of God. It was the Roman Centurion, placed there, no doubt, to help assure that Jesus’ execution would be completed. Does it not strike you as odd that most of the people who knew Jesus best, with whom he had lived, walked, talked, and laughed, had left him, and that it was a Gentile guard who witnessed to who Jesus Christ is? I do not believe that the role the Centurion played on this day was coincidental. He was there for a reason and quoted for a reason, and he speaks to us this morning to challenge us to look hard at who we think Jesus Christ is.

II. You may remember that before the Transfiguration, Mark reported that Jesus asked his disciples several questions.

“Who do people say I am?” Jesus asked. They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” Jesus asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter’s answer was, “You are the Christ.” This is my question for us this morning: “Who do we say that Jesus is?” We will not find the answer to this question in the opinions of others. Instead, each of us has to answer this question for ourselves.

III. The process of finding out who Christ is has been seen by the Christian mystics as one that requires a lifelong process of discovery and change.

I invite you this week to enter into a time of exploration and discovery. Our Holy Week services are designed to draw us deeper and deeper into the mystery of who Christ is. This morning we processed around and into the church proclaiming that Christ is our king. We followed a metaphorical donkey and waved our palm branches in acclamation of Christ the King. Then just moments later, we yelled, “Crucify him.” Make no mistake, our voices are a part of the crowd’s voice.

On Monday and Tuesday, we will walk the Stations of the Cross on the labyrinth and come together for Holy Communion. We will begin to go deeper into the mystery of Christ's passion. We will explore the connection of Christ's passion with the times of suffering, death, and resurrection in our own lives. On Wednesday in *Tennebrae* we will become more acutely aware of the gathering forces of darkness, and on Maundy Thursday, we will experience the self-sacrifice that is associated with love and loss. We strip the altar and enter into an all-night vigil just as Christ lived through the vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane. On Friday we watch and wait at the foot of the cross, guided by the movement of music and the reflection of some of our brothers and sisters. We open ourselves up to the profound power of comprehending that what Christ did for us on the cross was voluntary and painful. On Saturday we wait.

And in the Great Vigil of Easter and our Sunday morning services we celebrate the victory of Christ over death. We will move through this exploration and discovery together – from joy, to anger, to reflection, to darkness, to love, to loss, to grief, and then to new life and resurrection. *Amen.*