

Sunday 27th August 2023: Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or other suitable time.



StF 317 H&P 74 'At the name of Jesus' by Caroline Maria Noel (1817 – 1877)

Opening Prayer

Think of the past week and say both 'thank you' and 'sorry' to our loving God.

Psalm set for today: Psalm 124

To think about

'If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...' When might you have said this?

Gospel reading set for today: Matthew 16 v 13 – 20

StF 356 MP 378 'Jesus shall take the highest honour' by Christopher Alan Bowater (b 1947)

Message from a Circuit Friend

In the gospel reading (Mt.16:13-16) Jesus asks his disciples what people think about him. There is a television programme entitled "Who do you think you are?" in which somebody of renown engages in an ancestral search of their origin. As a consequence of this, all sorts of information is revealed that was previously unknown. What is it that motivates people to investigate their ancestry? Is Jesus engaging in something similar by asking his disciples about people's perception of his identity? It is more likely that Jesus is trying to ascertain who, and how many people, have realised who he is and believe he is the long awaited Messiah. When we want to open a bank account, obtain an insurance policy, take out a loan or apply for a job, (as well as many other things), we are expected to provide proof of our identity. There are many elements involved in this that may require us to provide evidence of many personal details as well as a passport or driving license with a recent photo showing what we look like, a contact phone number, and our employment status. Dependent on whether the information supplied is satisfactory a decision is made to either agree to the application or not. Jesus receives various replies to his question, but only when Simon Peter speaks up does Jesus respond positively. It is clear that if nobody else has yet realised who he is at least Simon Peter has. The other disciples become aware of Jesus' claim as a result of this exchange, but Jesus tells them **not** to make it known to others. Why not? There are three reasons I can think of;

1. Publicising who Jesus is will cause a negative reaction among the religious leadership.
2. People need to make their own mind up about who Jesus is. This requires their personal involvement in an enquiry into what history has to say and what Jesus spends his time doing. He doesn't want people saying he is the Messiah because other people have told them he is, and they are just repeating what they have heard.
3. Jesus doesn't want people to have misguided ideas about what the Messiah should be like, or what his role is in society.

So the question arises for us too. Who do we think we are? What is our identity? How many people when asked the question about you will include in their reply; "S/he is a Christian"?

Quentin Stephen (Local Preacher and member of Watton Methodist Church)

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for our world... for the church... for our communities... for our families & friends...

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

StF 319 MP 77 'Christ triumphant, ever reigning' by Michael Seward (1932 – 2015)

May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.

Apologies to John Hull from Beetley MC for missing his name off his Circuit Message last week.