

Sunday 23rd August 2026 Trinity 12 Benefice Holy
Communion Ampleforth

What matters most in your life? There are many good answers we might give: our family, our health, our security, our hopes for the future. But today Jesus asks a question that reaches beneath them all: “Who do you say that I am?” Our answer does not belong only to a creed or a Sunday-school lesson. It shapes whom we trust, how we live, and where we turn when life becomes difficult.

Jesus begins with the easier question: “Who do people say that I am?” The disciples report what they have heard: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. They can answer without revealing themselves. After their various answers then comes “Who do *you* say that I am?” He makes a clear distinction between the “people” – out in the world – everyone – and you. You who claim to be a follower. Jesus turns from public opinion to personal faith: “Who do you say that I am?” That question cannot be answered at a distance. This is a basic question that all followers of Jesus must answer – and not just once, but at various times in life: Who do we say that Jesus is? For us, and for our world and does that matter most to you than anything else?

Peter answers, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” We know those words. Many of us have heard them since childhood, but what is Peter actually saying?

Every person carries some understanding of God, and those understandings can differ greatly. Even among Christians, our picture of the one God we worship is not always the same. As faith matures, our understanding should deepen—not because God changes, but because we should always be seeking to see more clearly. That matters because what we believe about God shapes the way we pray, serve, forgive and hope. That is why Jesus begins this conversation. He knows that what the disciples believe

about him will shape the lives they lead. Their answer matters then, and our answer matters now, more than anything else in our lives.

But Jesus is not asking for a familiar answer recited from memory which has no relevance or motivation. He asks for a confession made with the head and the heart—with the soul, and finally with the life.

So, imagine Jesus asking you directly: “Who do you say that I am?” What would you answer? And what in your life would show that your answer is true? Our response sets the direction of our lives.

But there is one last piece of this story that is vitally important. Peter’s confession is not left as a private insight and Jesus immediately speaks of his calling to build his church. The personal faith Peter confesses becomes a foundation for a community: people called to worship, who learn and serve together. Our understanding of Christ is tested, deepened and sustained in that community of faith. We need that community, not because the church is perfect, but because faith is difficult to sustain alone. We need Scripture, prayer, worship and the witness of other believers. When storms come, others remember hope for us; when our courage fails, others strengthen us. Jesus gathers disciples into a community because we need one another.

The church is not perfect because it is made up of people who always should consider themselves imperfect and needing God’s mercy to make them perfect. All its members have different gifts as St Paul describes in his letter to the Romans. Those gifts come together in the church for its mission to carry the Gospel into the world: to offer healing and hope, to work for peace and justice, and to love in his name., and Christ promises that the powers of darkness will not finally prevail against it.

So today, amid all that our world is facing, we confess again that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. We trust the one who meets us in every storm, who gives a peace beyond understanding, who hears our prayers, and who promises to remain with us always, even to the end of the age. That is who Jesus is. But today his question remains: “Who do you say that I am?” May our answer be heard not only in our words but seen in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.