

## Who am I? Mark 8.27-38

*Pilgrims (including Bishop Robert) contemplate the cliffs at Banyas near Caesarea Philippi, which many people think was the site of Jesus' fateful question. This natural rock-face was dedicated to the god Pan and decorated with niches with statues of the Roman emperors. A good place to ask the question: Who do you say that I am? Thanks to Rod for today's TFTD.*



“Ah!”, he said, “So you’re Matt’s Dad,” It was the first time I remember that greeting, but I will never forget. At last, my son was known in his own right, rather than as my son.

I too, grew up living in the shadow of my father. He was actively involved in the church as I was growing up and in Boys’ Brigade and so at all sorts of events I was known as Frank Hill’s son. It was only really when I went off to University that I really began to be known as a person in my own right, or so it felt at times.

I went off to university hoping and expecting that this would be the time when I would really discover who I am and what I want to be rather than just being a reflection of my parents – good though that was. I was going to university for the ‘Wine, women and song’ – well, beer and women (no-one would want to hear my singing!) ‘Who am I?’ was a question that loomed large for me then. Am I just my father’s son, or an athlete (yes, I was then) or Tuba player? – I was that too.

That “Who am I?” question loomed large for me at that pivotal moment in my life. Here it was that I discovered my Christian faith. Here it was that I met my wife. Here it was that I set out on the lifelong path of being a Chemistry teacher, or so I thought.

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V27. “Who do people say I am?”

These are the questions that Jesus asks here in Mark.

V29. “Who do you say I am?”

With these questions, which are asked in all four gospels (though in slightly different ways) we reach an absolutely pivotal point in the gospel and it seems that it’s the response to the second question that marks that turning point.

<sup>29</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

<sup>30</sup> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Martin Kähler, a German theologian, famously described Mark’s Gospel as a “passion narrative with an extended introduction”. A disproportionate amount of space has been given to Jesus’s final week rather than his entire ministry or the thirty-some years that Jesus had lived beforehand. Indeed, Jesus’s death is already foreshadowed in Mark 2:19 and perhaps earlier *if* the beloved son in 1:11 is an allusion to the sacrifice of Isaac.

You see, Jesus isn’t asking the question ‘Who am I?’ rather, “who do *people* say that I am? ... And you, who do *you* say that I am?” and the response changes everything.

Peter responds, “You are the Messiah!”

From here on Jesus is not focussed on a ministry of teaching and healing around the Galilee area. From here on its all about his journey to Jerusalem and to the cross – it’s all about his Passion, that we will be journeying through over the next

couple of weeks.

In the end isn't that the significant question that we all must face as we encounter the Jesus of the Gospel, the Jesus of the Church?

“Who do you say that Jesus is?” and the answer we give changes everything!

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