



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Quinquagesima 2020

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want
I wanna really, really, really wanna zigzag*

No, I have no idea what that means, either! But those lyrics helped to sell over 7 million copies of the Spice Girls' single 'Wannabe' by the end of 1997.

Depending on how you count them, Jesus asks more than a hundred different questions in the Gospels and many of those are really hard questions.

Indeed, Jesus will often counter a question put *to him* with a question asked back of the enquirer.

One commentator has calculated that in St John's Gospel alone, Jesus asks five main types of questions which in turn can be subdivided into seventeen further categories!¹

It would be so much easier for us, if Jesus had simply given lists of what to do and how to do them rather than pose questions. But his deep and searching questions always take those who have asked a question of him into somewhere more profound and, ultimately, more satisfying than a straightforward answer.

So, what do you want, what do you really, really want?

It's the question Jesus puts to the blind man in this morning's Gospel?
It's the question Jesus puts to his disciples James and John.

It is the question Jesus puts to us: *What do you want, what do you really, really want?*

When James and his brother John answer the question, it is clear that what they want is a reward for leaving everything behind to follow him. They want recognition, they want power; they want to sit on golden thrones, one on his right hand and one on his left hand, when he comes in to his glorious Kingdom.

The blind man simply wants 'to see'. He wants to be made well, to be made whole.

If we are honest with ourselves, I suppose our answer to Jesus's question would lie somewhere between the answer of the blind man and the answer of James and John, although I am not sure where "I really want a zigzag" would come!

The forty days of Lent which now lie ahead of us are forty days in which we are invited by the Church to reflect honestly and bravely on Jesus' deep and searching question: What do you want?

What is it that we want, what is it that we really, really want?

We lead busy - often frantic lives. Our diaries are often full, more than full, and all that we can manage is to get through each day without too many mistakes or calamities before we collapse exhausted into bed.

But each year, we are invited to journey with Jesus, in the company of his disciples, to the cross of Calvary outside the walls of Jerusalem and, as we do so, to take some time to stop, to think and to pray on the way; to take a moment or two reflect each day, perhaps just after waking or just before going to sleep, and to pay really close attention to Jesus'

question: What is it that you want, what is it that you really, really want?
- and to answer it honestly.

Amen.

ⁱ Douglas Estes *The Questions of Jesus in John* (Leiden: Brill, 2013)