



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Trinity XX & Last Sunday after Trinity 2020
8.30 am & 11 am

Matthew 22.34-46

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

The Gospels are full of questions.

Questions put to Jesus by the Pharisees and the Sadducees;
questions put to Jesus by the crowds or by individuals.

Indeed, there are 490 'Jesus-shaped' questions in the gospels:
Jesus *asks* 307 questions and he *is asked* 183 by others; he
answers only 3!

In this morning's Gospel reading we are told that Jesus had
silenced the Sadducees, and, indeed, he had done so in a
rather tortuous debate about marriage, remarriage, death and
resurrection.

Thinking that they now had the upper hand, the Pharisees have
a go and they bowl a quick googly as Jesus goes into bat by
asking him a question about the Law, not just about the *Ten*

Commandments, but about the *more than 600* laws identified and codified by the Pharisees.

In reply to their tricky question, Jesus hits a swift and easy six before asking the Pharisees a question:

‘What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?’

The answer Jesus receives is pretty straight forward, ‘The son of David. Obviously!’

But Jesus does not stop there, he follows his question up with a googly of his own (*the cricketing metaphor begins to run a bit thin at this point*),

‘So, Pharisees, you uncontested Doctors of the Law, How can David call this Messiah ‘Lord’ if he is David’s son? Surely, it must be the other way round?’

To that, we are told, the Pharisees have no answer and all the wickets of the Pharisees as well as those of the Sadducees have now been taken.

No wonder, Jesus has to die!

Some years before Jesus asked his question about David’s son of the Pharisees, following a particularly long trek with his Disciples through the hills and valleys of northern Palestine, by a boat journey across the Sea of Galilee and a very long walk

north from Bethsaida to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, who people said he was.¹

The two questions are inextricably linked, for already the crowds on the streets of Jerusalem have been crying out ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’ and welcoming ‘the Messiah, the Christ’.

The crowds know who is, even if the Pharisees do not.

Just as Peter had shouted out “You are the Christ, the son of the Living God” in Caesarea Philippi, so the ordinary people on the streets of Jerusalem at Passover-time had cried out the same words.

They, the ordinary people of Jerusalem, recognised the Galilean Builder Carpenter as the Christ, the son of David, just as Peter had recognised him, even if the religious intellectuals and grandees had not.

Here right in front of the noses of the Pharisees and the Sadducees was the long-promised Son of David, the Messiah, the Christ, the One before whom even the great King David would have to bow low and call ‘Lord’.

So, who do we say Christ is?

What is our honest answer to this most searching and important of all questions?

“Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey?”

Who is Jesus?

Is he, a ‘good man’, somebody who helps us know how to live a good life?

Is he, a ‘wise teacher and philosopher’, or one of history’s great prophets’?

I hope our answer is an unequivocal ‘no’. No, Jesus is not just a ‘good man’ or a ‘wise teacher’ or ‘one of history’s prophets’, not even ‘perhaps the *best* man who has ever lived’, nor ‘the *wisest* of all wise teachers’, not even ‘the *greatest* all prophets who have ever been’.

Peter and the people of Jerusalem knew exactly who Jesus was, Jesus, is “the Christ, the Messiah, God’s Anointed One!”

That is why the “wind and the sea obeyed Him”, why sick people were healed, lame people walked, deaf people heard and blind people saw; that was why even the dead were raised and why the grave could never, ever hold him captive.

This is Jesus, God’s only Son, our Lord, the One who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary; the Jesus who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; this is the Jesus who descended to the dead and who rose again, the Jesus who ascended into heaven and is now - and is for all eternity - seated at the right hand of the

Father from whence he will come again to judge the living and the dead.”

This is the Jesus into whose eternal life we have been baptised, the Jesus from whom we draw life every time we eat his flesh and drink his blood, the Jesus who forms us into his living, serving, worshipping body, the Church with a capital ‘C’, to be the life of the world and to draw men and women into the fellowship of his Kingdom.

‘What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?’

‘Who do you say that I am?’

The answers we give to those twin questions is everything; they will set our direction in life, they will order our priorities in life and shape our passions; the answer will inform everything that we do, everything that we are and everything we shall be; the answer, flunked, so spectacularly by the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the Chief Priests and the Scribes, by Caiaphas and Herod and Pontius Pilate will change our lives – irrevocably - and determine our destiny. Amen.

ⁱ Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20 & Matthew 16:15