

Pastor Roy's Sermon from August 27, 2017

Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" We don't know why Jesus asks this question. Jesus doesn't tell us, in this moment, who he thinks he is, or who we should think he is. He blesses Simon. But he doesn't give a lesson on what Simon has said, or tidy up the corners of his faith statement. Essentially, God bless you Simon, you've been listening to God and are willing to follow where God leads. Clearly, Simon does not have Jesus' identity nailed down. Shortly after this moment, Peter tells Jesus to put away his talk of suffering and to jump back on the glory road of victory. No pain, no trouble, just good stuff. That's what you're about Jesus. Power is building all around us. We are getting stronger. This is the right path, and we're on it with you. The history of Israel has led us to this moment. We get it. We will give our lives for your cause. Success, Jesus, you are success.

But Jesus doesn't go there yet. He doesn't say, Yes, Simon, you got it, but you don't quite understand what Messiah, anointed one, means. Let me explain it to you so you get it. Perhaps Jesus knew that he would only get it after he was dead and they had a chance to really think about it and give up their expectations. They too would die with Jesus and be raised to a new understanding, a new life. The book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament make this clear. But there was only one path to that place—suffering, disappointment, letting go the false expectations. Put simply, they would learn to listen to God.

Who is Jesus? A great example of faithfulness and compassion—savior of the people on the edge of society. Or is he mainly a Savior—sent by God as a unique sacrifice to set the record right of our many wrongs. The disciples clearly thought him to be a moral, spiritual, political, leader capable of saving the Jews from Rome. I think a number of people today think of him in the same way—a political organizer with moral and spiritual fringes. People on the left and the right believe this way. His way will fix society.

Peter names Jesus as the anointed one, Son of God. There are similarities between Peter's confession and the identity placed on us at baptism. We use different language to refer to ourselves, but the identity is strikingly similar. We proclaim that the baptized is anointed with the Holy Spirit. We anoint the newly baptized with oil as a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence and blessing. Throughout our lives, we are anointed with oil for healing, we are anointed with ashes to remind us we are children of the spirit and of the dust. We also name the newly baptized, child of God, meaning son of God, daughter of God.

Do you think of yourself as a child of God, do you think of yourself as anointed by God to serve as Jesus served, to love with mercy as Jesus loved with mercy? Is this your identity? It's true. You are.

Paul reminds us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we may be faithful friends of God. Children of God, anointed by the Spirit to serve. We forget, yes, so we need our minds renewed.

How do we find renewal? Listen in quietness? Read good books? Watch good movies? Surround ourselves with good company? Check out good resources on the internet?

Renewal is all around us if we listen. We don't have to work hard, if we just listen. Your life, my life is teaching us who we are, who Jesus is, that we are anointed by God's Spirit, God's children and we can bless everyone around us with the knowledge that they are, too.

Let us be renewed in faith, in our gifts, so that we can be renewers of our communities, renewers of the social groups to which we belong, renewers of our families, renewers of the earth and its resources. We need leaders who will lead the way into mercy. Many will follow. Few will lead. Be a leader. You are sent by God for compassionate service. You are a child a God. Amen.

Children's: What will things will you use at school. What will you take to school? What friends will you see again at school? Will you meet a new friend?

What was your favorite moment this summer? Or what kinds of things did you enjoy? What do you like about summer? What if summer lasted all year round?