

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

So how would you answer the question? You know, the question Jesus asked the disciples. He said, "But who do you say that I am?" Think about that as you listen to this conversation.

Jane: "Oh, hi, John. How're you doing?"

John: "I'm doing fine. Just trying to keep going."

Jane: "Say, John, I heard they're starting a contemporary worship service over at First. I bet you are excited about that."

John: "I would be, but we don't go there any more. We're going to Park Avenue Church. It's closer to where we live and we like it. Besides, it really doesn't matter where you go."

Jane: "What do you mean? It doesn't matter?"

John: "You know, we're all trying to get to the same place."

Jane: "So you're saying all religions are the same?"

John: "Sure, don't you think so?"

Jane: "I don't know about that."

John: "We're supposed to love God and love one another. That's the bottom line. I think you just got to find the religion that helps you do that. I have a friend who is a Muslim. Couldn't ask for a better guy. And you know Rita, she's been practicing yoga and really getting into meditation. I'm not sure I could do that yoga stuff, but hey, it's helping her. So, the way I look at it, if it works for her, then I'm OK with it."

Jane: "But that's not what we were taught in confirmation."

John: "It's a matter of interpretation. Pastor Joe had his view. I have my views. We don't have to agree. We just need to get along with one another. I get tired of all the different religions saying they're right and everyone else is wrong. Like I said before, the important thing is to love God and love one another. That's all that counts."

Jane: "I agree that we are to love God and we must love one another. Jesus said that."

But Jesus also said that no one can go to God except through him.”

John: “I don’t think Jesus meant that literally. Besides, there are other religious leaders and we need to listen to them as well.”

Jane: “John, I’m confused. I thought you were a Christian.”

John: “Oh, sure. I was baptized. I guess that makes me a Christian. But I’ve just - you know - grown up. I don’t think Christians have a corner on the truth.”

This conversation could take place nearly anywhere in America. Earlier this year the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life conducted a nation wide survey. They found, that while Americans are very religious, the majority of Americans don’t believe there is any one right way. And certainly, when it comes to Jesus, Americans have a variety of views.

So what do you think? In today’s Gospel reading Jesus asked the disciples a tough question, “But who do you say that I am?” Jesus wasn’t taking a poll. He wanted to know what was on the hearts and minds of his disciples. The question is now before you. Who do you say that Jesus is? What is your relationship with Jesus like?

It is tempting to avoid the question. After all, it sounds like the kind of question that can easily lead to an argument. And who wants an argument? And besides, we may believe there are more important things to focus on. When we think about lives being lost in Iraq and Afghanistan, when we think about the financial squeeze that is choking many of us, when we think about the challenges of another school year, why get into a hassle about Jesus?

But maybe, just maybe, Jesus is the one who can help you. Indeed he is! He is the one who can successfully lead you through this maze we call life. He is the one who can calm your fears in the face of all the challenges you face. He is the one who can help you reach your potential and achieve your dreams.

This we know for sure - Jesus is solidly committed to you! So much so that he would do anything for you, even die on the cross for us. You can’t find anyone who cares more for you than Jesus. You can’t find anyone who is more willing to stand by you, no matter what, than Jesus. You can’t find anyone who is more willing to help you than Jesus.

So make the good confession with Peter. Declare Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. Follow him. Live life his way. That’s the kind of life that is rock solid. And upon such a rock the kingdom of God is built. And nothing, nothing at all, not even the forces of hell can shatter that rock.

Make the good confession. Let Jesus take your life to the next level. Let Jesus make a difference in your life. Let Jesus give you an awesome life.

August 24 - this is the time of the year when we are settling into new routines. This year, break new ground. Do something radical. Follow the way of Jesus. He is special and he will not only

do great things for you, he will help you do great things.

A majority of Americans believe any religion will do. A majority of Americans don't want to take Jesus seriously. Don't be conformed to this world. Choose Jesus. Make the good confession. Live life the Jesus way!