

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

*You are the Christ . . . The Son of Man was destined to suffer much.*

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' And they told him. 'John the Baptist,' they said, 'others Elijah; others again, one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he asked 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the Christ.' And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him.

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'

He called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.'

### ■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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# Breaking Open the Word



# THE SAVING WORD

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## 'WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?'

This quintessential question arises today in two ways: 'who do *people* say I am?' and, 'who do *you* say I am?' The setting for this event that forms the turning point in Mark's Gospel is 'on the way' to Caesarea Philippi. Being on the way is being on the journey with Jesus. It is not clear whether they enter the villages. This conversation is often envisioned as occurring beside the rock wall of the waterfall with its niche and caves and the spring that emerges at the base of Mount Hermon. This cultic setting of the Temple of Pan, other deities and a marble temple to Augustus might distract from Mark's purpose. Meandering along the stream under a Roman bridge, past a water mill, a synagogue and a palace might be enough context to consider the questions on Jesus' lips.

To the first question 'they' – the disciples – answer variously, 'John the Baptist ... Elijah ... one of the prophets.' Peter answers the second question definitively 'You are the Messiah.' This is a crystallisation of the identity of Jesus that we have known from the first line of this Gospel. Yet, it is still not to be told and has been misunderstood so far. What is important for the disciples, and for us, is the first of the passion predictions that follow, and the reality of Jesus' mission. After the rebuke by Peter, Jesus declares to the crowd as well as the disciples 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.' In light of this, how will you answer, 'who do you say I am?'

Dr Rosemary Canavan

## FIRST READING

Isa 50:5-9

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

*I gave my body to those who struck me.*

The Lord has opened my ear.

For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away.

I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle.

The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults. So, too, I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be shamed.

My vindicator is here at hand. Does anyone start proceedings against me?

Then let us go to court together.

Who thinks he has a case against me?

Let him approach me.

The Lord is coming to my help, who dare condemn me?

### ■ The word of the Lord.

## RESP PSALM

Ps 114:1-6, 8-9. R. v. 9

**R. I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living. (or Alleluia!)**

1. I love the Lord for he has heard / the cry of my appeal; / for he turned his ear to me / in the day when I called him. **R.**

2. They surrounded me, the snares of death, / with the anguish of the tomb; / they caught me, sorrow and distress. / I called on the Lord's name. / O Lord my God, deliver me! **R.**

3. How gracious is the Lord, and just; / our God has compassion. / The Lord protects the simple hearts; / I was helpless so he saved me. **R.**



4. He has kept my soul from death, / my eyes from tears / and my feet from stumbling. / I will walk in the presence of the Lord / in the land of the living. **R.**

## SECOND READING

James 2:14-18

A reading from the letter of St James.

*Faith without good works is dead.*

Take the case, my brothers, of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith. Will that faith save him? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, 'I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,' without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.

This is the way to talk to people of that kind: 'You say you have faith and I have good deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds – now you prove to me that you have faith without any good deeds to show.'

### ■ The word of the Lord.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Gal 6:14

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

**My only glory is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, which crucifies the world to me and me to the world. Alleluia!**