

FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY
Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
June 20, 2021
“Who is He?”

Jesus has just finished teaching the crowds in the form of a parable; stories that contain a message. When He is finished, Jesus instructs His Apostles to get into a boat and cross the lake (Mk 4:1-41).

While crossing the lake a storm comes up. The wind was blowing hard, and the huge waves were threatening to sink their boat. Through all of this, Jesus was asleep in the boat. The disciples are terrified and then wake Jesus up. Jesus commands the elements to be quiet and still. To the disciple’s great surprise nature settles down in obedience to Jesus. The disciples are amazed at this and say regarding Jesus: “Who can this be that even the winds obey?”

The Fathers of the Church see great symbolism in this event.

- The boat is the Church in the world which Jesus commands.
- The wind and the sea are the troubles of the world which rock the Church and threaten her survival (St. Augustine, *Sermon* 51).
- Jesus asleep in the boat can mean that Jesus can seem to be somehow distant from us and unresponsive to our prayers when we call out to Him.
- Even though the world attempts to sink the Church – Jesus will never allow this to happen – He is Lord of the world and all that is in it. All is subject to his command – even the powers of nature (Mt 16:18).

The Apostles are stunned at this event and what Jesus has done in commanding the wind and sea to be silent. They put forth a question regarding Jesus that has always perplexed the world. They say: “Who can this be that the wind and the seas obey him?” (Mk 4:41)

This becomes the perennial all-important question that the faith of many will hinge upon, and indeed the whole universe. “Who is Jesus?” If a person can answer this question accurately then all else will become more easily understood.

- Pilate will ask Jesus: “Are you the King of the Jews?” (Jn 18:33)
- Jesus will ask His disciples: “Who do people say that I am?” Peter will respond correctly: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mt 16:13-15)
- Nicodemus will come to Jesus at night in search of answers to his questions (Jn 3:1-21).
- Many will come to Jesus perhaps not knowing exactly who He is – but they come to Him in faith knowing that the power of God was in Him – and that He had the power to heal them of their various maladies; the woman who touched the hem of His cloak; the blind man who wanted to see; the centurion whose servant was dying, and many others. They came to Jesus believing that the power of God was with Him (Mt 9:21) (Mk 10:51) (Lk 7:1-10).

And finally, as Jesus hung upon the cross, one criminal will be blinded by his pain, anger, and disappointment, and will fail his day of visitation from the living God who is crucified before him, and he will mock Jesus. But the other criminal through grace will see Jesus for who He is and receive salvation that very day as he said: “Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Lk 23:39-43). The soldier standing at the cross will say: “Surely, this is the Son of God.” (Mt 27:54).

Even though the Apostles and the early Church will accurately identify Jesus as the Son of God and divine within Himself, many in the church will experience their own moments of doubt. A bishop by the name of Arius will begin to contaminate the doctrine of the Church and teach that Jesus is not Divine, not God. The term “Arianism” will emerge. It will take brave men like St. Athanasius to steer the ship of the Church back on course and then through the Council of Nicaea the Church will confirm the authentic doctrine regarding the identity of Jesus (CCC 195, 192, 817).

It is not only the Apostles who ask the question: “who is Jesus”, but in fact every human being must grapple with this question – because their salvation hinges upon it (Jn 14:6). When a person comes to understand that Jesus is divine, the Son of God, consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit then:

- What Jesus said and did,
- When he said and did it,
- Why he said and did it....will then come into focus.

Consider these words of Jesus:

- “I am the way, the truth and the life no none can come to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6).
- He said to Peter: “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven, whose sins you hold bound are held bound” (Jn 20:23).
- “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you” (Jn 6:53).
- “Take this all of you and eat of it for this is my body” (1 Cor 11:23-25).
- “Take and drink – this is my blood” (Mt 26:26-28).
- “I am going to prepare a place for you – so that where I am you also may be” (Jn 14:3).
- “I am going to my Father and your father, to my God and your God” (Jn 20:17).

These words make very little sense to the person who does not believe in His divinity. Some claim to believe in Jesus but they do not understand Him to be God and therefore, these words of Jesus find no place in their heart.

Ask yourself who is Jesus? Do you believe that He is God? If you can make the words of the Nicene Creed your own only then can you make these words your own.

- “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
- “That saved a wretch like me.
- “I once was lost but now am found,
- “Was blind but now I see” (John Newton 1725-1807).