

September 16, 2018

Mark 8:27-37

This month we are focusing on the theme “Welcome Home”

What a faith home looks like, feels like, is – is different for each person involved

This week we are focusing on the cornerstone of our faith home, Jesus Christ, and are examining what that means for our faith family, as a community and as individuals

“Who do you say that I am?”

“The Messiah” - Hebrew

Greek: Christos, thus Christ

translation: Anointed, Chosen One

Why does Jesus ask this? Does it matter?

It matters for Jesus: it cost him his life

More importantly, for those who thought like the disciples thought – that Jesus was the Messiah – it meant trouble was coming

Jesus warns them that following him, walking with him, was dangerous

Marcus Borg, Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time, says two traditional ways of “believing” in Jesus, the Christ

Traditional/Evangelical

- Son of God

- Sent to die
- saying “I believe” saves you from hell

Traditional/Mainline approach

- believe what you want doctrinally
- accept Jesus as great Teacher
- follow teaching
- change the world

One is founded on verbal belief of the individual

The other on a community program for being good

I have been guilty of living into the latter

One view of Jesus is “magical thinking”

The other unrealistic utopia – “Reign of God” equivalent to Karl Marx’s communist ideal

One is focused on the afterlife, not now

The other an impossible dream

Jesus, for me, is someone who has “tapped into” the Life Force, God – that which is in and all around us

- experience of being one with the world
- a centering that calms and focuses
- a seeing that rejects the order of things

To follow Jesus means to join him on a journey of relationship building with God

Which is also a journey of relationship building with our neighbor, because of the incarnate nature of God

Jesus, in today's reading, tells us this journey together will not be easy, this is because, as I read the whole story of Jesus and the experiences of his followers, there really are forces of evil seeking to disrupt the relationship with God and our neighbor that Jesus is trying to lead us into.

Trying to live the love of neighbor Jesus taught, trying to welcome the stranger, the outcast, the untouchable begins to create a unity that feels threatening to the power structure

What all this means for me is that the church family becomes even more important

It is here I am helped to find my way on this journey into relationship with God and my neighbor; a journey into wholeness, into the unity that already exists, but which I resist, and possibly damage

And, I hope, I, in turn, help others find their way on this journey

We make mistakes, we make wrong turns, we judge incorrectly – all the time

It has been here, with your help, that I have been helped to turn around or see a different path or be less judgmental

Jesus, the Christ, is the Spirit Guide of this journey for me

a journey that has changed my life, more than once.

Ultimately, then, it is not about life after death or the creation of the perfect society

Rather, it is learning to live in right relationship with God and my neighbor

A journey enhanced by, made doable by a community of faith

A never-ending journey within and toward God, with Jesus Christ as my Spirit Guide

This is who Jesus Christ is for me.

Who is Jesus Christ for you?

Amen.