

Who is Jesus?

Mark 8:27-38

Who is Jesus? The writer of the gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus asking his disciples "Who do people say that I am?" They responded "some say you are Elijah or one of the prophets". Jesus then asked them, "Who do you think I am?" And Peter responded "You are the Christ". Then surprisingly Jesus told them not to tell anyone who he was.



Scholars have talked about this surprising statement by Jesus. They have talked about the "Messianic secret" in Mark's gospel. Most of the people in Jesus' time were looking for a Messiah – but their concept was a Messiah who would come with military power and overthrow the Roman empire and establish a time of peace for Israel similar to the time enjoyed under King David.

Perhaps the Messianic secret that Jesus was confronting was this misunderstood concept of who he was. He began to talk about his coming suffering and death and Peter was upset. He blasted Jesus for such talk, evidencing that Peter too had the wrong idea about what kind of Messiah Jesus was to be.

Today in a series of short stories for children of all ages we explore who Jesus is for us today. Today we celebrate the beginning of the church school and the return of children and young people to grade school, high school, colleges and universities. We celebrate that we are not alone, but that our experience teaches us that God in Christ is with us wherever we go.

The first story is one of the generosity of God's love and forgiveness. I had pocketfuls of loonies – in my shirt, pants, jacket and even some in my shoes. I continued to give out loonies until everyone had one, and then said, Jesus has more love and more forgiveness than this minister has loonies. It was a time to celebrate the incredible depth of God's love, the unending of God's grace as we as Christians experience it in Jesus.

The second story was simply reading the "The Book with No Pictures". It is a surprising book with lots of twists and turns and shows how fresh and

unexpected the love of God is in Jesus. There is nothing boring about God's love and nothing boring about being people of love. We also celebrated the inclusivity of God's love. As Christians we experience it through Jesus. Other people of faith experience God's love in different ways and unexpected ways. We can learn from each other.

The third story was a celebration of God in Jesus being with us every single day in simple human experiences. In the waking to a new day, in the eating of food that nourishes us, in the trees and flowers and grass that greets us as we head to school, in the relationships with friends, teachers, colleagues and then at the end of the day in relationships with family, we experience God's presence. As a celebration of this we shared laminated cards that had people's names on them saying :

You are a beautiful child of God. You are loved by God. You are loved by your family and friends. You are loved and supported by the people of Unionville Presbyterian Church. You are never alone!

The fourth story was about being rooted in God's love through Jesus. As a church we are a people with deep roots in the stories and teachings of Jesus. As a symbol of these we gave out long erasers that looked like roots. Erasers ground us as well in the forgiveness of God taught and shared by Jesus.

The fifth and final story time was a series of stories told by people in the congregation in the form of cardboard testimonies. A testimony is a time of feeling and experiencing a transformation because of the love of God in Jesus. Jesus is someone who transforms our lives. Here are some of the cardboard testimonies. The first phrase was on one side of the cardboard, the second on the backside. People simply showed one side, then the other side:

Shocked, angry frustrated
Relaxed, calm, content

Hurt, confused, afraid, angry
Feeling peace through prayer

Attachment, fear, judgment, disappointment
scared
Acceptance, peace, understanding love
thankful

Scared, scared, really
rejuvenated, reborn, really

bored
Grief, sad, scared

Hungry, tired,

Appreciation, connected, beloved
pancakes

Free breakfast, church, yummy, love,

Worried
like?

Frightened, sad

What does love thy neighbour look

Prayer, thank you
Canada

Reassured, sad

Bring refugees to

I was frustrated about being nagged about my driving. Sarcastically I responded with "thank you for your help". The answer was "I love to help you". A light turned on for me. I understood suddenly the 'nagging' was love, concern and caring for me. My heart was full of gratitude.

We learned that Jesus is someone whose generosity is unlimited. Jesus is someone whose love is unexpected. Jesus is someone whose love breaks all barriers. Jesus is someone who deeply roots us in God's love. And Jesus is someone who transforms us. This is who Jesus is for us today.