

TRINITY 11 2020 – Matthew 16: 13-20 – ‘Through the Keyhole’ (‘Who do you say that I am?’)

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Curate**

“Who do you say that I am?”.....

Now this is not quite the question posed by Keith Lemmon (or if you’re my age, David Frost!) the presenters of ‘Through the Keyhole’ – the programme where guests are asked to solve the identity of the person whose house they have just been shown.... But I’d just like you to hold that image because it is something I will return to later.

“Who do you say that I am?”... is the make or break question that Jesus asks His friends in the last days before His crucifixion.

Having spent the last 3 years with this small community - living with them, teaching them, performing miracles in front of them, praying with them..... this is now the moment when Jesus is to find out whether they have truly fathomed who He really is *whether God’s plan has worked* and importantly, whether the consequences of their answer can now begin to take place..... consequences which will change the lives of these people, and all those after them.....?

And it is the wonderfully impulsive Simon Peter who speaks up, and gives Jesus the answer He is looking for – “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” he declares!

And I wonder whether at this point Jesus’s human side will have been breathing a huge sigh of relief, an internal elated cry of thanks to God the Father Because as Jesus says, this revelation has been given to Peter by God the Father. And so setting aside the bigger picture of what Peter’s answer was going to mean for the world..... this was also the confirmation that Jesus was hoping for – the green light that it was now full steam ahead!

Because although Jesus still had His excruciating death to come, He could now at least face that event knowing that it was all worthwhile that Plan A had worked..... and that following His death, (and subsequent resurrection, ascension and outpouring of God's Holy Spirit), the kingdom of heaven could truly begin to take root on earth.....

Because the kingdom of heaven is what it is all about!

Returning to the programme I mentioned earlier, the object of 'Through the Keyhole' is that the contestants, having been shown around a certain house and been able to glimpse clues to the personality of the owner, are then able to identify that owner to correctly recognise who in fact does live *in a house like this...*

The kingdom of heaven is Jesus's home. This is where He came from, where He returned to after His death and resurrection, and where He now once again lives, in perfect union with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. It is the perfect home of loving relationship, and the place where God has always wanted us to be and enjoying with Him.

Those glimpses of heaven which Jesus epitomised and showed us on earth – this heavenly home that is built and abounds with love and grace and truth, peace, forgiveness and mercy, kindness, compassion, wholeness and healing..... This is the home to which Jesus offers us the keys to unlock and enjoy here and now!

Peter was the first one to be given these keys..... it was both his privilege and responsibility to be *first in the house...* and to consequently show others what making our home with Jesus can look like. A home where there is fellowship with God, and with each other. A home that is not exclusive, other than that it begins by knowing whose home it is.

Because I would suggest that when, like Peter, we recognise and accept Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, we are also given those same keys ...

Keys that open up a home which brings freedom, as we learn to let go or loose those things that bind us - prejudices, anger, hatred, jealousy, deception, fear...

And keys which do more than just help us..... but which enable us to help others as well....

For as we let go of all the stuff that has cluttered our lives, we begin to see through the windows that have been cleaned by God's loving hand..... that enable us to view everything clearly, through God's eyes – without judgement, but with love and compassion and grace and mercy – to see the best in all of God's creation Because it's amazing how seeing the best in someone helps loosen the chains that bind them.....

And as we settle into this house, although it will continue to get messy from time to time - because we're not perfect - the Holy Spirit is a great cleaner! And with Her help it will soon return to being a home of warmth and welcome to all, a place of peace and refuge when storms brew outside, and a home that will attract others.....as they begin to see in us glimpses of its true owner and builder...

'Who do you say that I am?' is the question that Jesus continues to ask each one of us.

We may purposely choose not to hear it, to try and avoid answering it, or maybe to deny the question is even being asked

But it is the most important question we will ever hear.

And the most important answer we will ever give..... for when we do correctly identify who Jesus is, the consequences are life-changing, life-transforming and life-giving, and will give us the keys to the best 'forever home' we can imagine!

AMEN