

24th Sunday in Ordinary – Mark 8:27-35

One Sunday morning a man showed up at church with both of his ears terribly blistered. So, his pastor asked, "What happened to you Jim?"

"I was lying on the couch watching a ball game on TV while my wife was ironing nearby. I was totally engrossed in the game when she went out, leaving the iron near the phone. The phone rang, and keeping my eyes on the TV, I grabbed the hot iron and put it to my ear."

"How dreadful," the pastor said. "But how did the other ear get burned?" "Well, you see, I'd no sooner hung up, than the guy called back!"

He just didn't get it. Lots of folks never get it and never understand how life really works, even at the simplest levels. That's why Jesus is pressing his followers — and us with a challenging question in today's gospel: "who do **YOU** say that I am?"

A book I read several years ago entitled "Between Sundays" talks about how AUTHENTIC Christianity is a life to be lived Monday through Saturday, in our homes, where we work, and in our neighborhoods.

Christianity is for everyday wherever we are and under whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

You see, it is a lot easier to pray that a friends or enemies needs may be supplied than it is to actually supply them.

To belong to a religion is easier than being religious, easier than following Christ.

Today we have Jesus asking His disciples about all the rumors that are spreading about Him and who he is - Some said you are John the Baptist, others say Elijah or one of the Prophets.

Then Jesus asks the disciples to speak for themselves - Who do **YOU** say that I am? A very humbling question! Simon Peter, in great humility answered - You are the Christ.

Humbling ourselves to answer that question goes against every prideful bone in our bodies. **BUT** this is what we must do if we are to experience the fullness of life God has called us to.

A noted anti-Christian activist once said that "things have come to a pretty pass when religion is permitted to interfere with our private lives."

And to that statement we might reply "that things have come to a **WORSE** pass when an intelligent human being could make such a remark."

I wonder if this person has ever considered the millions who have followed Christ, sometimes to a violent death, because they **DID** allow their religion to interfere with their private lives.

Our response to the question - Who do **YOU** say that I am? - is an active response whereby we declare **HIS** worth. It is not a passive statement, rather a participative one. It is not simply a mood or feeling, but a response.

To practice our faith is to respond to what God has done for us. Have we come here this evening/morning in response to God?

A magazine article I read about liturgy talked about State-of-the-art Worship. With our massive, modern churches providing a sense of awe and wonder. The beautiful and intricate stain glassed windows setting a mood for worship. The sound systems amplify and project the voices of worship. All state-of-the-art.

I would rather say this evening/morning that worship is not state-of-the-art, rather it is the state of our heart.

Jesus asks...Who do **YOU** say that I am? AMEN!