

Questions Jesus Asked

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9th September 2018

Proverbs 1: 20 – 33

Mark 8: 27 – 38

In conversation, a question can open up new ideas, challenging the status quo.
A question can turn a conversation in a new direction, raising new topics or issues.
Even if a question is unanswered it has an enduring effect.... ...Right?!

Like all Ordained Ministers, I have monthly Professional Supervision.
This is a totally confidential meeting with someone who assists in reflecting on your situation.

A good Supervisor often works with a superbly insightful question.
“Why did you do that?” What other option might there be?”
A good supervisor seldom tells you what you should do (although I’m sure they have an idea about what would be best)
Instead they ask you a question, to get you to respond and thereby discover something new for yourself.
Billy Connelly says that questions work well with the police.
He says the best thing to confuse them is ask them a question:
“Can I help you officer?!”
It’s not what they expect.
They don’t know how to respond – it throws them.
Even if you’re naked on the supermarket roof at 3 in the mornin’...
“Can I help you?!”
Wha...? Wha...?

A question can take us away from what is usual.
And an insightful question can lead us to new discoveries.

Jesus used questions a lot in his conversations with lots of different people.
The questions Jesus asked often addressed a specific area in peoples’ lives.
His questions were able to identify what was going on in people’s inner life – where there is inner conflict or hypocrisy, doubt ...and where there is a mustard seed of faith germinating.

Matthew 9:4: But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil thoughts in your hearts?”

John 5:6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?”

Matthew 12:34: You brood of vipers! How can you speak good things, when you are evil

One author has said

“Jesus is too much the Jewish prophet to merely stabilise the status quo with platitudes.

[Answers] give us more of a feeling of success and closure... “

(Richard Rohr)

Questions allow God to change us.

In today's Gospel reading, what's the question Jesus asks?

'Who do people say that I am?

And Jesus goes on, asking a more specific question of his disciples – not just who do 'people say that I am... But who do you say that I am?

This question contrasts the belief of others with the belief of the disciples – with an emphasis here on the 'you'.

By stressing the confession the question identifies those who acknowledge the true identity of Jesus, the Christ.

Peter's response is 'You are the Messiah.'¹

If we answer that question the same as Peter, what are the implications for us?

This morning, we've addressed our prayers to our "Lord",
and sung "O Lord my God"
– these are acts of worship that express our loyalty.

What are the implications of our loyalty to Jesus our Lord?

Yeah, that's right... I'm going to mention our new Mission Statement again (I can't help it!)

Our Mission Statement, outlines HOW we live and share our faith:

We live and share

- *We participate in God's mission.*
- *We serve others and share our faith by living and proclaiming hope.*
- *We help people to live fully as Christ shows us.*

How?

- *We practically and spiritually care for those in need.*
- *We are hospitable; we share homes and meals with others.*
- *We proclaim our faith with word and action.*
- *We pray with and for others.*
- *We allow our whole lives to be shaped by our faith.*
- *We speak truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) on issues of social and global justice.*
- *We trust in the Holy Spirit, discerning together the will of God.*

Furthermore, we continue to be guided by God's Holy Spirit in our lives.
And one such way, that God's continues to speak to us, is through scripture.

¹ Curiously, this response receives no acknowledgement from Jesus. It is not recorded by Mark.

Perhaps Mark figures it was the obvious truth about Jesus' identity, if you'd been paying attention to the story up to this point!

So, (to come full circle) we can look at the questions Jesus asked, and consider how they may change us.

[Read these out...]

Mark 3:4: Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?"

Luke 10:26: He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?

Luke 12:25: And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

John 13:38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me?

Finally.... Another question from today's Gospel...

³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

To God be all the glory!
Amen