

“But ...who do YOU say that ...I am?”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a 15-year-old boy and his father were driving past a tiny airport near their small town in rural Ohio. Suddenly, a low-flying, single-engine plane spun out of control and nose-dived into the runway.

The boy yelled, “Dad! Dad! Stop the truck!”

Minutes later, the boy was pulling the pilot out of the plane. The victim was a 20-year-old student flier, who had been practicing take-offs and landings. The young man died in the boy’s arms.

When the boy got home, he threw his arms around his mother and cried,

“Mom, he was my friend. He was 20 years old!”

That night, the boy was still too shocked to eat supper. He went to his room, closed the door, and lay across his bed.

The boy had been working part-time in the local drugstore. Every penny he made, he spent on flying lessons. His goal was to get his pilot’s license when he turned 16.

Naturally, the boy’s parents wondered what effect the tragedy would have on their son. Would he stop taking lessons or would he continue? They knew the decision would have to be his, solely. Two days later, the boy’s mother brought freshly baked cookies to her son’s room. On the dresser, she saw an open notebook. It was the one he had kept from childhood. Across the top of the page was written, in large letters: **The Character of Jesus.** Beneath was this list:

**“Jesus was sinless.
He was humble.
He championed the poor.
He was unselfish.
He was close to God ...”**

The mother saw that, in her son’s hour of decision (in his ‘Dark Night of the Soul’), he was turning to Jesus for guidance. Then she asked her son:

“What have you decided about flying?”

The boy looked into his mother’s eyes and said:

“Mom, I hope you and dad will understand, but, with God’s help, I MUST ...continue to fly.”

That boy was Neil Armstrong. And, on July 20, 1969, he was the 1st person, in the history of human-kind, to walk on the moon. Few people, who watched that historic event on television, knew that, one of the main reasons Neil Armstrong was walking on the moon, was Jesus. They didn’t know that, it was from Jesus, that he drew strength and guidance to make a crucial teenage-decision that was now responsible for his walking on the moon!

I enjoy sharing that true story with you because it answers the **‘Jesus-question,’** from Luke’s Gospel, which I just read to you --in a way that we are not used to hearing it answered.

‘What is the **‘Jesus-question’** & how is it answered in a way that we are not used to hearing it answered?’ you ask.

Well ...I am glad you asked that question (or two)!

The ‘Jesus-question’ was: **“But, who do YOU say that I am?”**

Young Neil Armstrong didn’t answer the question, in the usual way, by saying to Jesus:

**“You are the Son of God,” “You are the Messiah,” or
“You are the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.”**

NO, he answered it personally and much more simply than we are used to hearing it answered:

**“You are a sinless person.
You are a humble person.
You are a person who cares ...who champions the poor.
You are unselfish and a person who is close to God.”**

He didn't give a deep, theological answer to the question –“Who do you say that I am?”
He gave a personal answer. He looked into his own heart and described how he experienced Jesus in his personal life.

Each one of us must do the same thing. We must answer the **‘Jesus-question’** –“**But who do YOU say that I am**” by looking into our heart & describing how we experience Jesus in our personal life.

For some of us, Jesus is a person to whom we can turn for guidance in times of confusion.
For others, he is someone we can turn to for strength in times of trial, in our **‘Dark Night of the Soul.’**
For others still, he is someone to whom we can turn...who understands us, even when we don't understand ourselves!

If the 1st half of the Gospel asks the question: **“How do we experience Jesus?”**
then the 2nd half of the Gospel asks the question: **“How does Jesus experience us?”**

“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must ...take up his cross, daily, and follow me.”

These words challenge us to ask ourselves:

“How does Jesus experience us? Does he experience us ‘daily’ ... as his followers?”

In other words, do we pick up our cross, daily, and follow Jesus? Or, to put another way, a more practical way –do we imitate Jesus in our daily life? I mean...

Are we for other people –what Jesus is for us? Do we ‘mirror’ him? Do we ‘echo’ him ...for real?

Are we a person to whom others can turn...for strength in times of trial (in their ‘Dark Night of the Soul’)
...for guidance in their times of confusion ...for help in their times of need?

Are we this kind of person, especially to members of our own family?

To sum-up:

How do we experience Jesus? –as Neil Armstrong did, i.e., as someone who plays an important part in our daily life? Or is Jesus merely someone we think about for an hour on Sat. afternoon or Sun.? The next question is even more important: How does Jesus experience us? Does he experience us as his follower or merely as his fan? Do we imitate Jesus or merely admire Jesus? Do we pick up our cross, daily, and follow him ...or merely sit on the sidelines of life and applaud him as he carries his cross by us, alone?

These are the 2 questions the Gospel places before us today: Who is Jesus in our life? Who are we in Jesus’ life? No one can answer those questions for us. **BUT** ...answer them, we must!

I now close with this prayer, written, anonymously, nearly 1,500 years ago:

**Lord! Be a bright flame before me. Be a guiding star above me. Be a smooth path below me.
Be a kindly shepherd behind me. **Be** these things –today ...tonight ...and forever. Amen.”**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.