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ORDINARY 21A

23rd August 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

God is everywhere,
In this space and all spaces,
In this time and all times.

God is waiting to meet you and is ready to welcome you,
Just as it has been for all eternity.

So be still.

Pause

Get ready to notice the spirit working,
Through words on the page,
Through sounds around you,
Through familiar and unfamiliar smells,
Through all that you see when you look up from what you are reading,
Through the touch of your hands as you hold them together to pray.

So be still.

Pause

If you feel able speak aloud the following words,
God of all time and space I notice you here,
I am ready.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Matthew 16:13-20 – Click for reading

Responding to the reading

Jesus asks his disciples a simple question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

The answers come quickly: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets.

People have opinions about Jesus. They always have. Some see a wise teacher. Some a revolutionary. Some a healer. Some a moral example. Some the Son of God.

Then Jesus asks a second question: "But who do you say that I am?"

Everything becomes quieter. The conversation is no longer about public opinion or theological debate. It becomes deeply personal.

Peter answers: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus blesses him, not because Peter has worked it all out, but because this insight is itself a gift of grace. Yet what is striking is what happens next. The very same Peter who

recognises Jesus so clearly will, only a few verses later, misunderstand him completely. Later still, he will deny even knowing him.

Peter is capable of profound faith and profound failure, and Jesus calls him anyway.

Perhaps that is one of the most hopeful truths in this passage: discipleship is not about achieving perfect understanding. Even Peter, the rock on whom Jesus says he will build his community, spends much of the Gospel getting things wrong.

Faith is less about certainty than about relationship. What about us? How do we hear this conversation today?

Jesus is not saying: ‘can you explain every doctrine?’ or ‘can you defend every belief?’, but "Who do you say that I am?"

Our answer may change as we grow, or depending on the kind of week we have had. The Christ we encountered as a child may not be the Christ we encounter in grief, or joy, or old age. Our understanding deepens. Questions emerge. Certainties soften. Love expands.

That is not a sign that faith is failing, but it may be a sign that faith is maturing. Jesus does not ask us to stop asking questions. Instead, he invites us into a lifelong conversation. Each stage of life brings us back to the same question, but with new experiences, new wisdom, and new humility.

Who is Christ for you today? The one who comforts? The one who challenges? The one who walks beside you? The one who overturns your assumptions?

Perhaps the answer is all of these, and more. And perhaps what matters most is not having the perfect answer, but remaining willing to keep asking the question. So today, reflect on this:

- If Jesus asked you today, "Who do you say that I am?", how might you answer?
- How has your understanding of Christ changed over the years?
- What might God be revealing to you now that you could not have understood ten years ago?

The journey of discipleship is not about arriving at complete certainty. It is about continuing to walk with Christ, allowing our hearts, minds, and lives to be shaped by the One who is always greater than our understanding.

May you have the courage to keep asking honest questions, the humility to keep growing in faith, and the joy of discovering Christ anew in every season of your life. May the grace that first called Peter continue to call you—again and again—into a deeper relationship with the living God.

Hymn / Song:
552 STF – Here am I, Lord - YouTube

Blessing

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
May I step out into a world full of abuses of power and posturing about strength,
And turn to you, for a different model of leadership, an alternative conversation about power, a commitment to peace, always.
Help me to follow in your way, this week, by the love in your Spirit I pray

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 24th August

- Create two interlocking circles by touching index finger to thumb on both hands and connecting the loops. Let this small gesture remind you of the invisible ties that connect all of us as siblings in Christ, calling us to look out for each other.

Tuesday 25th August

- Holy God, Loving Christ, Spirit of Love,
  Show me how to join in with your mission here on earth, today, I pray.
  Show me what is mine to do, through your guiding hand.
  Amen.

Wednesday 26th August

- What was the last song or piece of music you listened to? Play it if you can, or simply bring it to mind and play/sing through it in your head. What could God be saying to you through this piece of music?

Thursday 27th August

- You might like to say the Lord's Prayer to yourself, in whatever language or version is most meaningful to you. Which part resonates with you today?

Friday 28th August

- Today is marked in some traditions as the feast day of Augustine of Hoppe, one of the most influential philosophers and theologians in the Western world. He was alive in the late 4th and early 5th centuries and is known as the 'Doctor of Grace' for his influence on developing theologies of grace, including the concept of prevenient grace which was so important to John Wesley, 1300 years later.
- Today, let us give thanks for the wisdom of those who came before, and for their experience of the faith, which has shaped and blessed ours today.

Saturday 29th August

- If you have Blu Tack, Plasticine or something similar, take a small piece and mould it with your fingers. Make it into any shape you like - something round, long and thin, or even a cube shape. How is God moulding you to be the best version of yourself?