

Who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him?

In the name etc.

How many questions do you think you are asked a day? Well there is at least one for a start. I bet if you tot them up the number is enormous. From simple ones- would you like a cup of tea, to leading questions, designed to get one answer or another- the sort we see plenty of in an election campaign. Or the less common questions which occasionally haunt us: what's it all about, who am I, what are we doing here?

You possibly come to church as a break from such questions. If so, bad luck. Christianity is a religion of questions. Indeed Fundamentally Christianity poses us one critical question, who do we think Jesus Christ is? It poses the same question that the disciples asked themselves in our Gospel reading: Who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him?

Who is this? This God, this man? This symbol and this reality? This flesh and this blood and this divinity? Well, he is all of those things. This is perhaps the thing that those of other faiths and none find most difficult most scandalous even, about Christianity: that Christ is both and not either or.

Paul in our lesson from the epistle makes this abundantly clear. He is a God has nothing and yet possesses everything. Is all powerful and yet has come among us. Who suffered appalling dishonour and yet is honour itself. And this same Christ calls us to be the same, to embrace the living paradox of being human and yet seeking the Divine.

How do we respond to that call? What is the practical outworking of that call? Again, in the final line of the epistle, Paul answers the question: "In return, to this call open your hearts".

This exists on two planes- yes the call is to open wide our hearts to love others as God has sought to love us. But we are also called to open them not only to loving but to being loved. The question- who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him? is answered thus; this one who commands the elements as God is the same one who calls us in love, the same one who calls us in tenderness and in joy. The same one who was a babe in Bethlehem and the same one who died upon the cross. This same God, this same man, this same Christ.

It can sometimes be tempting to err towards one or the other: to see only the almighty and divine Christ or to see only the human Jesus. But for him to be the perfect love that we know he is, he must be both: he must both enter into our fallen humanity and also lift it up beyond its broken humanness into something higher and greater and holier.

This is who this is. The one who opens his heart as wide as it can go, inviting us into the very heart of pure and perfect love itself. The perfect expression of this is in the holy

communion. The moment where he gives wholly of himself, body and blood as spiritual food to each of us. When we come to that most holy moment in a few minutes, think on his call. Think on the beautiful and glorious truth that the one who was and is before all things, the very force of the universe, comes and offers himself to you, in such humble elements. Comes to you with his heart fully open and as pure and perfect love. The challenge of what we do in return is clear for each of us. It involves one final question which we must ask ourselves here and now, as we prepare to receive the physical expression of that love: are we prepared to take up his invitation and open our hearts in return?

In the name