

WEEKLY SERMON

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Who do you think you are?

Looking back on my childhood I can picture the intimidating towering presence of a teacher leering at me over his glasses and roaring 'who do you think you are boy?'

There was always huge emphasis on the word 'boy' to underline my insignificance and inferiority in comparison to his apparently limitless power. To be fair, I'd probably been caught doing something I shouldn't have been doing, and a reprimand was no doubt in order.

When I read this week's passage from Acts (Acts 4.5-12) I can just picture Annas the high priest, Caiaphas and the rest of the rulers, elders and scribes thinking the same about Peter: 'who do you think you are?'

Who did this uneducated, working man think he was as he went around speaking about this Jesus who they'd all seen die but that he claimed had been raised back to life? Who did this country fisherman with his funny accent think he was that he might challenge people like them?

It's easy to forget that three short years earlier the same Peter first met Jesus while fishing in Galilee. His reaction wasn't joy, it was terror as he cried: 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'

The years between then and today's reading had their ups and downs, including Peter famously denying Jesus three times after he was arrested. One of those denials followed someone in Jerusalem recognising his unusual accent as being from Galilee.

Yet in today's reading Peter is a different man. He's been boldly proclaiming the good news of Jesus in words and deeds. He's not worried about his accent or his lack of education. He's not worried about the many mistakes of his past either.

It seems that nothing and no one is going to intimidate him as he stands in the midst of the great and the good, the rich and the powerful and challenges them to face up to who Jesus is. The same Jesus they rejected and crucified is the 'only name under heaven... by which we must be saved'.

In my work as Director of Vocations for our Diocese I encounter many people who struggle to comprehend that they might be called by God to take up a particular ministry in his Church.

Sometimes it's the equivalent of my teacher's words ringing in their ears 'who do you think you are?' Sometimes it's mistakes of the past or worries about their background, their education or their accent.

I tell them all the same thing: God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

It doesn't matter who you have been or even who you are.

If you are called by God, then he will give you the words to speak and the power to speak them, no matter what your past or present circumstances.

It was true for Peter, it is true for me and for so many of those I have the privilege of working with.

This Easter season I encourage you to ask yourself afresh: 'What might Jesus be calling me to be and to do in his Church?'

Do so without fear of your human limitations because, unlike my teacher, Jesus' power to transform us is limitless. Do so with joy, because there is nothing more life-giving than allowing God's will to be done in our lives.

Rev Nick McKee
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