

## **Who Are You?**

Abbie, my youngest granddaughter is in P3 at Meadowburn Primary and recently she brought home a poster that her teacher made up which was basically asking the question who are you?

Every one of her classmates had to write a sentence with what they liked about Abbie. These are just some of the things that had her class said, Fleur said, "She is a brilliant friend". Kit said, "she always brightens up the classroom". Cara Rose said, "She is beautiful". Innes said, "She is really kind". Evie said, "She has a great heart and she is my best friend". Aaron said, "she is amazing at football." Mia said, "She is a super role model". Ariella said, "She is a great friend and she always listens to the teacher when it's teacher time." Robin said, "She brightens up the school by making it a happy place." Sofia said, "Abbie is super at listening and she always tidies up her table" and her teacher said, "Abbie I love how kind and sweet you are. You are always such a positive young girl with a super attitude and you make our classroom fun".

Now, I know that this will be done for all the children in the class at different times and hopefully they all affirm their friends in this way; but how affirming is this to a 7-year-old! How affirming it is to know that you are loved, you are valued, and you are respected. I just love this style of teaching.

What's happening here is that Abbie is given an identity.

Who are you? And Abbie can say, well this is who my friends say that I am.

In our reading today, Jesus was asked the question by the Scribes and the Pharisees. Who are you?

In the times of Jesus, the Jewish law ruled! Those who could not live up to its demands were called sinners and were shut out!

The law had such a grip on people that it controlled society. It was a moral law but had much to do with religious observance particularly around purity laws, and for anyone to step outside of the law and claim any sort of authority, then they would be asked, who are you?

The law determined if you were in or out of the Jewish religious system; so many were shut out because they could not fulfil the demands of the law; it was beyond them, not necessarily their own fault.

This had the result that there were broken people, who were ostracised, cut off, excluded.

Jesus steps into this environment with a deep love for people. I have come he said

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,

Luke 4 v18-19

<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” He valued people for who they were, made in the image of His Father.

He had a burden for those who were excluded. He reached out to them, and made them feel special, that’s why so many were attracted to him; “Who is this man, who eats and drinks with sinners they said”?

Jesus loved the sinner, not the sin, but the person. Through the gospels, he reaches out to all sort of people, and makes them feel special and seeks to rebuild their lives, and put them together again.

He brought a fresh spirit of grace and the love of God to the ordinary people.

So, they continually asked him, who are you?

There is a popular song in the 80's that goes

*Take these broken wings  
And learn to fly again  
Learn to live so free*

*When we hear the voices sing  
The book of love will open up and let us in  
Take these broken wings*

As I read this passage this week, the question came to me also, who are you?

Who am I? Who are you?

Jesus was able to answer them; he seems to be speaking in riddles, but basically he is saying to them, this world is not my home, but you wouldn't understand that! I dance to the beat of a different drummer.

On one occasion, Jesus asked his disciples, who do people say I am? It was important for him to know what they thought? Some said you are a prophet, some a Rabbi, but Peter said, "You are the Son of God".

Peter came to that understanding of Jesus, and it transformed his life. There was an incident when Jesus and Peter were together and Peter fell on his knees and said to Jesus, "Away from me Lord for I am a sinful man!"

Peter, at that moment, saw himself often as he was, a bird with a broken wing, broken in spirit, caught in his own weakness, he was often his own worst enemy. Jesus continually reinstated him, because he loved him, and he saw a genuine heart.

In our Old Testament reading, God has been described as being like a potter at the wheel, and we are the clay and God works with the clay making us into something special for his own purposes. God is mending our broken wings so that we might fly again.

That's the work of God, he takes us with all our faults, just as we are, and all our weaknesses and he makes us into a masterpiece. He sees our potential; he begins his work with love. He begins by showing how much he loves us. He sent his own Son, to show us the depth of his love.

Isn't it wonderful, that the eternal God loves us.

Friday was Valentine's night, and a time when couples can demonstrate and affirm their love. It's good to be affirmed, whether that's in a marriage or a family setting or in church. But on Friday night, I popped into the BB to see how they were getting on, and here is Gregor, and the two Grahams, in the hall with the company section, spending time with them, and I thought to myself, its holiday weekend from school, its Valentine's night and here are those men, committed and dedicated to serving Jesus through the BB.

You are loved by God.

God sends us his valentine and his name is Jesus!

You see Jesus is like the potter at the wheel and we are the clay, and he needs us to be like clay; he needs us to be open to him working in our lives. Sometimes he needs to break the clay, and mould it into his shape, but all the time, he knows what he is making. He sees us before we were born, we are told and he has a plan for our lives and he has a plan for our eternal lives.

In Ephesians 2, he talks about us being his masterpiece, <sup>10</sup> "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago".

God calls us into a special relationship with him through Jesus. It's at that point in our lives when we are willing to let God become our potter, that we then hand our lives into his hands. Jesus calls us to himself and calls us to follow him and calls us into a life of service.

So how is this achieved, how do we become like the clay in the potter's hand?

To find our purpose in life, and who we are, and who God wants us to be, then it means we become a servant of Jesus. Jesus showed us this model, as he gets down on his knees and washes his disciple's feet and dries them and he said to them, "now that I your Lord and master have done this, so should you to each other".

He spoke about turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, forgiving our enemies, that's what it is to follow Jesus.

Jesus came to make people feel special, to heal their broken wings, it's making them feel that they matter and that they have a purpose in life.

As Christians, this is our primary task in life, to serve Jesus and to follow him closely, to walk in his footsteps and to become like him. When we do this, God is reworking us as we feel his loving, gracious, merciful hand upon our lives.

So, who are we?

If we are in Christ today, we are his children.

God calls us to live life to the full. Jesus said, "I have come to give you life and life in all its fullness". He could easily have said, "I have come to heal your broken wings".

He has come to us so that we become the people that God intends us to be, when we use the gifts that he has given for his glory.

Who are we?

We are called to be people of love. His greatest gift we are told is love. But this is a special love, it's not only a Valentine love but it's a sacrificial love; it's a love that gives without counting the cost; it's a love that is willing to die for our neighbour; it's a love that comes from above, and that is not of this world; it's a love that doesn't judge but is compassionate.

I started with Abbie and I'll finish with Abbie, one of the comments by a boy in her class said, "She always follows the school values and never lets her friends be sad".

What would they say of us? What do people say of us? That doesn't really matter as much as – what does God say and think of us.

The old hymn sums up perfectly,

*Just as I am, without one plea,*

*But that Thy blood was shed for me,*

*And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,*

*O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*

So, we come to God, just as we are, but we come to him knowing, that he loves us, and that he wants to make a masterpiece out of our life and he wants to heal our broken wings that we might fly again..

Let us sing, *Just as I am...*