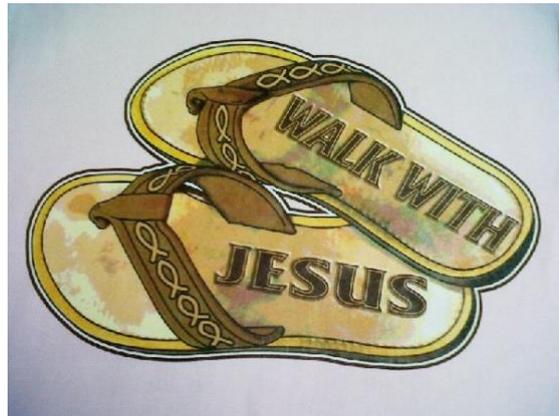


**Eleventh Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 23rd August 2020**

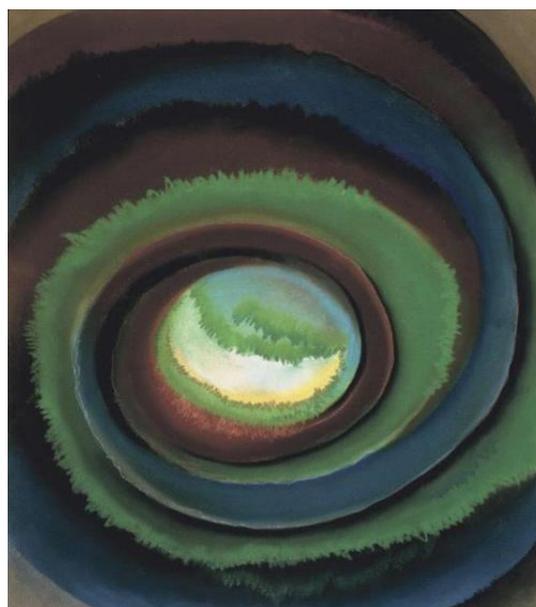


Dear Friends,

'Who do you say that I am?' (Matthew 16: 15)

Whilst I have been off playing with my bucket and spade these past two weeks, and with my phone and emails very definitely switched to 'OFF,' I have been grateful to Colin Sheath and Andrew Kent for offering us their thought provoking scriptural reflections. Colin encouraged us to *dwell* in the Christian values of Faith, Hope and Love; reminding us that we must focus our lives on Jesus as He guides and shapes us into the ways of His selfless love. Andrew developed this theme, encouraging us to *trust* God with the worries and uncertainties of our lives, so that we might know a sense of spiritual peace which passes all understanding.

In this way we have an understanding of God speaking to us through Jesus and His Advocate: at once guiding and filling us with the limitless love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are hard at work in and through us - urging others into that same sense of loving and eternal peace. This is what it means to be church!



'Pond in the Woods' by Georgia O'Keeffe

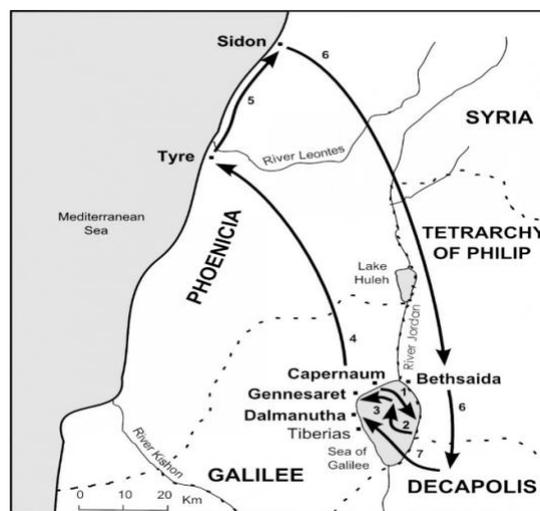
I wonder how far you have been able to travel this summer. Maybe you took the first available flight of Lockdown to find the sun, or, perhaps you thought long and hard before venturing out to see friends and family or to welcome them into your home or garden? Many peoples' plans to visit friends or discover new horizons resulted in places like Devon and Cornwall being inundated by tourists – folks suddenly feeling released from the constraints of Coronavirus restrictions and desperate for the heady salve of ozone and clotted cream! Newspapers have been filled with bewildering images of beaches packed to capacity – though, sensibly, most folks have managed to work out inventive ways to share socially-distanced visits filled with happy memories of friendships rekindled!



'Only Car in the Village!' by Alice Blount at Moreleigh, Devon

Our bible reading today gives us a glimpse of the lengths Jesus was prepared to travel in order to meet as many people as possible in the three short, yet eventful, years of His earthly ministry.

At the beginning of Chapter 16 of Matthew's Gospel, we find Jesus continuing on a circular journey which had already taken Him north from Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee up through the coastal Levant region of the Eastern Mediterranean to the prosperous ports at Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia (Modern-day Lebanon); and back south, inland to Decapolis, before travelling eastwards and back to Gennesaret in the region of Magadan and the familiar shores of Galilee.

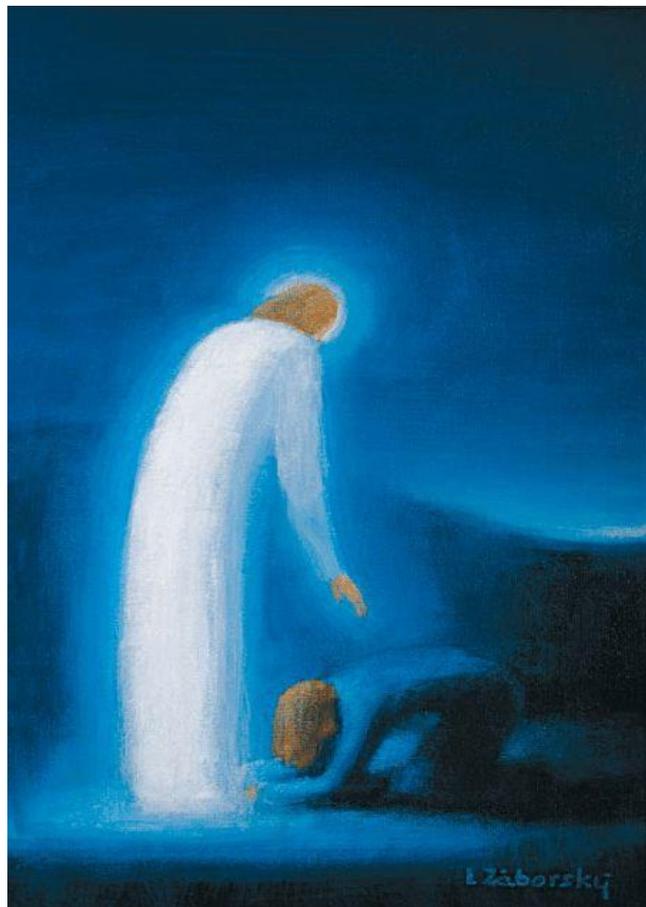


Map courtesy of thebiblejourney.org

From here, Jesus travels north again, this time following the River Jordan up to Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mount Hermon. Throughout these incredible distances, Jesus was tireless in His desire to meet and talk with the multitudes who encountered Him along the way – just as He gave time to His relentless critics, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were constantly demanding miracles ... and now signs written in the sky to prove that Jesus was God's chosen one.

This is the place at which Jesus rather turns the tables back on these religious questioners by asking of them: *'Who do you say that I am?'* The crowd, including some of the disciples imagined that Jesus was a prophet like Elijah. And as was the case in Jesus' day, today there are also many ideas about who Jesus is.

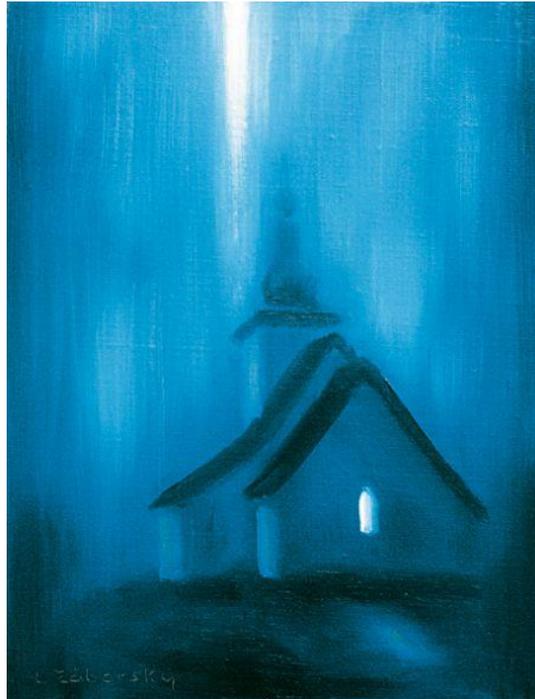
But right here, in the midst of all this confusion and questioning, Matthew describes another seminal moment in Jesus' ministry as Simon Peter bravely comes before the crowd and boldly confesses his faith in Jesus: *'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'*



'The Messiah' by Ladislav Zaborsky

Simon Peter, whom Jesus now calls 'Peter', (derived from the Greek *'Petros'* meaning rock) finally understands just who Jesus is – God incarnate! As the penny drops for Peter, so Jesus reaches a pivotal moment in His own life. He has found someone to whom he can entrust His earthly ministry – the church! And from this point, Jesus sets his sights on Jerusalem and His fate on the cross.

In our human way of thinking, it feels strange to imagine Simon Peter being entrusted with the profound responsibility of being 'the rock' of Christ's first church here on earth. After all, Peter, a fisherman, isn't what we might expect as the founder of such an important mission: He often acted impetuously; not thinking - putting his foot in his mouth; denying Jesus in His hour of need. Yet, even though Jesus knew all of Peter's weaknesses, He still described him as a rock - a strong, firm stone. Jesus realises that Peter's ability to see Him as Messiah comes to him as a gift from God! Jesus honours the intensity of Peter's spiritual conviction and values him as the first Christian upon which His church will flourish and grow.



'The Church' by Ladislav Zaborsky

The church is firmly founded on three distinctive God-given gifts. First and foremost, it is rooted in Christ himself – in His work of Salvation, dying for us on the cross. Then, it is anointed with Peter's faith, through his realisation of Christ as Messiah. Third, the church is founded, both on our own living confessions of faith that we too give Christ through our Baptism and Confirmation, and in our commitment to draw others into the peace and action of Christ.

So, we are ALL a vibrant part of the foundation of Christ's church. We must never forget that God has given us a share in these gifts with Simon Peter. Today, more than ever, we are challenged to think about how we might use them - whatever our flaws, whatever our age or ability, whatever our excuse.... to bind and to loose others in Christ and free them from sin, bringing them the certainty and joy of eternal life.

Yours, together in the church of Christ,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Commemoration of 75th Anniversary of VJ Day

Last Saturday, saw the 75th Anniversary of the end of the war still raging in the Far East after victory had been declared in Europe. The event marked the occasion, on 15 August 1945, when Japan officially signed its surrender against the Allied forces.

This photograph of my Father-in-Law, Sid Machin, was taken at the Chindits Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, ahead of a Service of Commemoration led by Prince Charles on behalf of our Nation and Allies.



Representing the remaining Burma Star Association Veterans, Sid was invited to lay a wreath and read the Chindits Prayer during the formal Commemoration.

With his customary humility, Sid has never shared the horrific experiences of his time fighting for peace under General Orde Wingate in Burma. His heart has always been with his comrades who fell in action, particularly those 'forgotten' in the Far East Campaign. Now aged, 96, Sid is one of the few remaining veterans who returned. He has lived an exemplary Christian life of love and service for all.

We join with Her Majesty in giving our grateful thanks to all those who fought across the Commonwealth, and have sacrificed so much for us to know peace, and to all our Armed Forces who continue to do so across the world today.

We will remember them.

The Chindits Prayer

Now when you mourn our glorious dead,
Remember what Wingate said:
Somewhere, somehow, I know not where,
You will proudly stand and say,
'I was there.'

Short-Term Schedule for the reintroduction of Sunday services.

Remember that our churches are open for daily prayer and for Sunday services - please see our website for more details at: <http://downsbenefice.org/>

All seats at our services need to be booked in advance. Please see the table below and book your seats by either calling or emailing the **Benefice Office** on **(01962) 880845** or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

	23 rd August	30 th August
Littleton	HC 10am	
Wherwell	Closed	H C 10am

A new schedule of services from September through to December will be issued shortly.

Box for Socks: Many thanks to each of you who has donated socks so far.



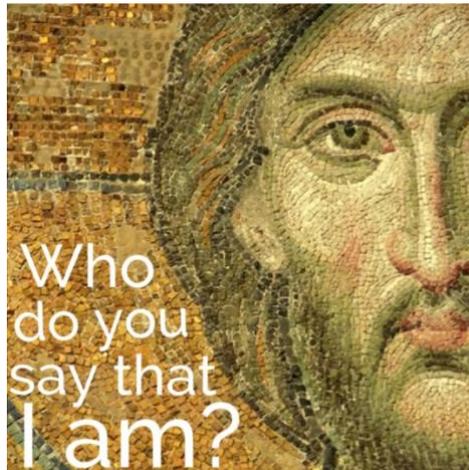
For those who haven't, don't forget there is a collection box in **St Catherine's Church porch** and at **each Sunday service** for you to donate **NEW** pairs of socks for men and women to be distributed to Winchester Nightshelter to support the 'Foot Health' programme for the hungry and homeless people on our streets.

Unfortunately, used socks cannot be accepted, only new ones. Any size welcome. Thank you!

Two weeks left to contribute – we are collecting socks until 31st August!!

Collect Prayer for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity:
mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace,
that we, running the way of your commandments,
may receive your gracious promises,
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



Matthew 16:13-20 – Peter’s Declaration about Jesus

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'

He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'

And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.