

Christ revealed in Jesus – Christ revealed in us
Rev Sharon Smith
Epiphany 2

The **testimony** of Christ has been strengthened among you... 1 Corinthians 1: 1-9
John 1: 29-42 The Apostle John's **testimony** in John the Baptizer's words – look the Lamb of God, I saw a dove descend down like a dove, I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God. Come and see...

They provide their testimony, what they saw and how they interpreted what they experienced. And how it enriched and strengthened them.

martureó: to bear witness, testify

Original Word: μαρτυρέω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: martureó

Phonetic Spelling: (mar-too-reh'-o)

Definition: to bear witness, testify

Usage: I witness, bear witness, give evidence, testify, give a good report.

Giving testimony to our experience... is scary.

It requires a vulnerability in our sense of interpretation of what we think has just happened. And there are so many versions of what might have happened.

For John and for Paul – they interpreted the life of Jesus of Nazareth, as being the Christ – the visible expression of God. And it rose out of the testimony of their experience.

For John the Baptist – a dove that was a sign of the Spirit, for Paul a blinding bright light.

What is the testimony of your experience?

- What is for us, the visible expression of God?
- Now understanding Christ is about the importance of Jesus of Nazareth, his person and work as the Christ, for those who have the eyes of faith to see who he was and why he was important for us. And how we are invited to be Christ to those around us.
- But understanding Christ is not simply a historical memory of Jesus, it is the interpretation of his significance and the grounds and nature of his significance for Christian faith and life.
- The figure of Jesus stands at the centre of Christian Identity and practice
 - o And it is up to us to resolve the puzzlement about the relation between Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ.
- What does it mean for us to claim that Jesus is the Christ...
 - *The many faces of Christology (Tyron L. Inbody)*

Richard Rohr has coined the phrase: Christ is not just Jesus' last name. For him, Christ is every visible expression of God. Material and spirit together. And Jesus is the fullest expression.

Allow me to geek out a little. And give some historical context.

There have been and continue to be 3 main ways that Christians seek to resolve the puzzle of the **person/human Jesus** and the **Christ** – God among us now, embodied, incarnated among us.

- **First:** Jesus and Christ are indistinguishable. Jesus of the gospels – that is the historic Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ confessed in the creeds. (Dominant way prior to the 18th century enlightenment)
- The gospels faithfully preserve the memory that he left on his followers.
- This set of assumptions don't take into account the historical critical method of the past 200 years
- Jesus Christ is the son of God

- **Second: The Modern quest:**
- Brings a critical lens to all texts "History is the past reconstructed interactively by the present through argued evidence in public discourse"
- Evaluated by what we know is possible – "Nothing can happen without cause, nothing can happen that cannot happen..."
- Faith statements about Jesus are permissible within the limits of reason alone – the problem of a historical Jesus is a modern problem
- E.g. Marcus Borg – Jesus as a Spirit person; John Dominic Crossan – Jesus as a wisdom teacher
- What we have in the gospels is an account written after his death (and their resurrection encounters) some of Jesus' friends confessed him as the Christ – that is they saw in this human a 'Spirit' that led them to write of what they knew of him post Easter into the accounts of his life.

- **Third: Most recently there is another approach - postmodern:**
- Lost interest in the distinction between history fact and interpretation and imaginative interpretation – because some have realised that we cannot make any clear distinctions between what actually happened and how it was interpreted.
- In this approach truth is not simply history – truth is truth because it is important to how we live our lives.
- When it comes to Jesus – it is the Jesus of the text. The Jesus in context – and we encounter Christ through reading the narrative.
- Faith is built on the story, the testimony – not what stands behind those texts
- The stories of Jesus, through which we encounter the risen Christ.

Whichever way we read the gospels, and we can read it any of these ways and be faithful. We can read it with or without an openness to encounter Christ here and now.

As people committed to following the way of Jesus, to opening ourselves up to the mystery of God, and of becoming transformed, we are invited to by faith to encounter the Risen Christ in the readings of the Scriptures. And that makes all the difference.

How we do it, is a lifelong journey. And we are called to pay attention to the life of Jesus, the words he spoke and the way he loved others.

And we open ourselves up to so much more. For Christ (the visible expression of God) is inviting us to meet God all around us.

Because my friends this Jesus of Nazareth or Jesus of the Gospel narratives, anointed as Christ, anoints us.

- Water Baptism
- Oil and Spirit
- Light – This light of the world passes divine light to you and to me. We are to be the light of the world. Christians, little Christs.

Christ revealed in Jesus – Christ revealed in us

Over the next 6 weeks of this Epiphany season, this season of revelation we are going to be hearing from members of the St Catherine's community:

stories of where they have encountered Christ in the life of another. Either someone they know, or a stranger.

- Who in my life reminds me about God?
- What do they do or say that resembles the life of Jesus?
- What do they inspire me to do, say or become?
- Was there a moment when this was particularly clear?