

Four words to describe Jesus

If you had only four words to describe Jesus, what words would you choose?

Or if you had just one word to describe Jesus, what would it be?

Now...will you please just jot down up to four words that capture Jesus and then think about what that says about him? Don't worry, this isn't a right/wrong kind of exercise, it's just finding out what qualities you associate with Jesus. Please take a moment now to think and write. What you've written gives you an idea of your image of Jesus and God.

Now I am going to read again our short Gospel from St Mark. One could say it contains the main message of St Mark's Gospel in a nutshell.

We are asking this question today because it is the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany, the season of revelations of who Our Lord is. Who is our Christ? We can carry this impression with us into Lent, and reflect on it during that time of quiet and contemplation.

Mark 1:40-45

40 A leper* came to him begging him, and kneeling* he said to him, 'If you choose, you can make me clean.' 41 Moved with pity,* Jesus* stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I do choose. Be made clean!'

42 Immediately the leprosy* left him, and he was made clean. 43 After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus* could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Any words describing Jesus stand out to you from this Gospel? Again it is not a 'right' or 'wrong' exercise. It is just an exploration to find out. Here are a few words that came to me.

Compassionate: Mark doesn't often relate Jesus' emotional state, but he does here. When Jesus sees this man approach him in need, he is moved immediately to compassion. Funny, only yesterday I came across this quote from Prince the musical celebrity: Compassion is an action word with no boundaries.

I think that can be said of our Lord...for him, compassion was an action word with no boundaries demonstrated here in today's Gospel. Lepers were really on the fringe...but Jesus' compassion...made him not only choose to heal the man, to make him clean, but to touch him...By touching him, he made himself 'ritually unclean' by Torah law...but that boundary didn't stop our Lord. Next slide We see an artist's depiction of Jesus touching the leper to make him clean. So first word for Jesus – compassionate.

What keeps coming to my mind is the 'Prayer of Humble Access' in the Book of Common Prayer. In this prayer which we pray just before receiving Communion, we pray... 'We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table. But thou art the same Lord –whose property is always to have mercy.

Whose property is always to have mercy.

Second Word - Liberator/Healer

Jesus was a healer. That is quite obvious, isn't it? He made things whole, he had the gift of healing. Over and over he healed the sick, and cast out the demons.

This drawing was first called Jesus the Liberator. I think it is now called 'The Laughing Jesus'. Jesus liberated people from afflictions. He set them free. I think this is how he looked and felt when he did it.

3. Jesus spoke plainly. In this Gospel Jesus speaks sternly to the man after he is healed. He speaks plainly and forcefully to him...he must go to the temple and be declared 'healed' by the priests according to their law. He needed that declaration from the priest to be accepted back into the community. Jesus sternly warned the healed man not to say anything to anyone. Of course the leper can't contain himself...and excited, he went out and told everyone! Jesus is not afraid to speak the truth in other situations as well. So Jesus, tells it like it is.

4. Jesus was selfless. He didn't want notoriety. He didn't want to be a hero or king. We assume that is why he told the healed man not to tell anyone. He wanted to get on with his call to spread the news that God was near. He couldn't remain inconspicuous though. What he was doing and saying made him stand out. The word gets out and he cannot go in the town but must remain in the countryside. But still, people flocked to him.

He just wanted to keep on moving amongst the people. Next slide

We see here another selfless act...a symbolic act. Jesus washes his disciples' feet. He is the servant king. He tells them to love one another by doing the same.

So who was Jesus? Who is Jesus? I found him to be

Compassionate, a Healer/Liberator, a Plain Speaker and Selfless. This is our Saviour. This is the One we follow. Maybe you found different words. They are good words. Let me know.

In the coming weeks of Lent, we can continue thinking about who Jesus is. Every time we hear a Gospel, we can think 'What is Jesus showing us about himself here?' Or maybe you and we can merely rest in his love...especially on this St Valentine's Day...marveling at the how far he reached out to us. Amen.