

May these words be pleasing.

Early on Friday morning the maths department was empty and I had playing a recording of Bishop Tom Wright from one of his lectures whilst I marked. I'd listened to quite a bit before someone else arrived and I turned the volume off on my laptop – but not the recording which played on, in silence. Later still, more of the team had arrived. So had the e-mailed recording of the headteacher's weekly notices. One of us puts this on and we all listen to it as we work. I said that I would do it and pressed play. Of course there was no sound because I had turned the volume off. Quickly turning this on the team first heard the deep voice of Tom Wright (who was still lecturing) utter three final words before Jenna, our headteacher, started her notices. Tom's last words were 'the divine presence', Jenna's first words 'good morning'!

Students are not backwards in describing the teachers inflicted upon them. Whereas the real Oscars were last week I received my first Y11-prom-oscar some years ago for being 'the cheeriest teacher'. My second, for being 'the best dressed teacher', my most recent for 'having the worst handwriting'. Further back still my name is still on the boards at the school where I was a student. The citation for that prize read: For being good at everything, but nothing in particular.

Today in our readings we think of identity. How we describe ourselves and others describe us is important. As is how we describe others, and what others mean to us. Most important of all is what Christ means to us, and how we describe Christ to others.

The identity of the chariot rider in our reading from Acts seems brilliantly relevant in a world in which racial identity and sexual identity are both crucial issues both as we interpret the past and as we plan a course for the future. Our rider is the Ethiopian Eunuch. His story is short. He meets Philip who is called to proclaim the good news about Jesus, and the Ethiopian Eunuch asks to be baptised. In terms of who we are, and in terms of our own identity, we are called to proclaim the good news to all people, all colours, all creeds, all orientations; and we do so based on our own experience of Jesus.

Do you know the game 'guess who'? Here are three 'guess who's', each offers a possible different experience of Jesus. Can you guess who in each of these three?
Guess who.

I am unsure. Do parents ever understand their children? I am unsure. I am unsure if I will ever fully understand. I don't understand why he was rude to me. And I never felt as though he was fully mine. At one time we thought he was going mad, I sent his brothers but they could not get past the crowds. For there were always the crowds, always wanting more and more, even his life. My child is gone, and now where do I go? I've recently heard a lot about a man called Paul and I'm just not sure, he never met my son, *my son*. I remember the garden, the joy, I am unsure if I will ever fully understand. Just now the child has gone, and now where do I go, I am unsure.

Guess who.

I am, or I was, the kingmaker. It was not about me, it was never about me. It was always about him, and about us and our freedom. I had the contacts, in the city, they had arms, I gave them the money to buy the arms, to be ready and they were ready. I promised them (I promised them) more money, much more, I promised them a leader, a Christ. The time came and it was perfect. We were few but the crowds, the crowds were magnificent. Think what we could have done, think of the money. But Jesus lost it, he blew it, he just didn't get it. I had to do something, you may think I was wrong, but I *had* to do something. I had friends at the temple, they hated Jesus but they-wanted-what-I-wanted. I took their money, they took my Christ, I needed both. All is lost, I am alone, but they will find me, they will want their money. I am useless, I am pathetic, I am sorry, I am scared.

Guess who.

I am well travelled, I followed my father who was a soldier. History will not record where I was born. Italy? Spain? Northumbria? Scotland? Some will judge me a villain, some a saint. I kept the peace of Rome as well as any man could. It is easy to kill, and I have. It is harder to know when not to kill and there was such a man that I did not kill. I am not a murderer. There was a man who I did not kill. I worship the gods and this man was of the gods. To my credit I listened to his God, or to my credit I listened to my wife. To keep the peace I gave licence to the crowd. To bring peace the crowd killed the man. For the peace of Rome but not for my peace I gave the soldiers. But this man I did not kill. I am not a murderer. I kept the peace of Rome as well as any man could.

It's now two thousand years later and we will have our own experiences of Jesus.

Here is a final description of Jesus, by Jesus:

I am the bread of life.

I am the light of the world.

I am the door.

I am the good shepherd.

I am the resurrection and the life.

I am the way and the truth and the life.

I am the true vine.

This is how Jesus describes himself.

If you, on leaving here this morning, happen upon a stranger on a chariot, how would you describe Jesus?