

## Meditation Matthew 16:13-19

Voice of a disciple some years after the event.

He was always first to speak, Peter, and usually he was wrong. Jesus used to get quite cross with him. And could he ask questions! No end of them, and he didn't seem a bit put off when Jesus got irritated with him. He would even argue with Jesus. Boldness to a fault.

I suppose it comes with knowing you've a family business to inherit- that gives you security, if you know what I mean, and a sense of knowing who you are.

I didn't much like it, to be honest. It was irritating, and the worst of it was that Jesus, even when he was cross with him, seemed to regard Peter as our leader. It was almost as though Jesus was teaching him to be leader: taking the raw material and developing it into the best it could be. But no, I didn't like it.

Then that day when he asked who people said he was. Several of us had a go at an answer. It was big stuff, of course: Elijah or John the Baptist come back. But we were confident, because we'd heard people talking in the marketplace about just that. It wasn't what we said; it was what they said. But that wasn't enough for Jesus, because he asked another question: who

did we think he was. Well, no one was keen on having a stab at that one. Far too personal, and far too much risk of being wrong. But did that bother Peter? Not a bit of it. He was straight in there. 'You're the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.' Of course, we'd all hoped. In the back of each of our minds, there was the hope that Jesus, with all the wonderful things he said and did, really was the Messiah- the one who, for centuries, Israel had longed for. But to say it? It felt like an obscenity, it was so shocking! Just too much. The nerve of the man!

We waited for Jesus' outraged response, all of us holding our breath as though we wanted to hold the world still forever, and stop what was going to be the telling off of all tellings off from happening, even to Peter.

But, for once, Peter was right. And more than right: his confidence in knowing that Jesus was the Messiah was a gift from God, it seemed- a revelation of what, to the rest of us, was just a tiny spark of hope.

I felt different about Peter from then on. Flawed he certainly was, in our terms, anyway. But God made him impetuous, confident, enthusiastic, and all the rest of it, for a purpose. And Jesus developed him into what he needed him to be: our leader. That was his role. He was no better than the rest of us, and no more loved, but leading was his role. We all have a role, and they're all important roles. God 'knit me together in my mother's womb' as the psalm puts it. And he knit all of us together: all of us different, but all with a role in God's plan.

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