



# SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2021

## DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

**The Parishes of:** Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington  
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

### ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

#### Twenty Fourth Sunday of the Year (B) : Mark 8: 37-35

'Who do you think you are?' - It could be an aggressive question to someone disrespectfully chancing their arm - or you may be a fan of the TV programme of the same name.

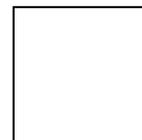
The surprising and fascinating discoveries coming out of research into family trees probably reminds each of us that our complex histories contain intriguing ancestors who we may or may not like to have met. But they're part of our story, skeletons in the cupboard included.

Who we are in ourselves may be different from the profile given to us by others. Their perceptions of us may be insightful or hastily judged and unfair. The serious business of giving a reference for someone highlights human perception and judgement and gives top priority to honesty and serious thought. The folklore image of individuals and institutions may be wide of the mark if based on selective facts and memories. Soundbites are usually simplistic, lacking finesse and often heavily weighted to promote a chosen viewpoint.

Commonly held opinions about each of us may be flattering or worrisome, creating welcome or displeasure. Gospel truth tells us we shouldn't judge - it's God's business - but we need to evaluate and assess people for all manner of good reasons. Who we are in the opinions of others has implications.

Jesus tested public opinion in today's Gospel story. Then he put his disciples on the spot - What do you think? He knew they talked about him, but not to his face. The question is shared with us, his disciples today. Answer it. Not the book answer, the 'correct', catechism answer, but your personal, heartfelt response. Risk being inadequate, incomplete, and don't try to impress.

Your answer may change, perhaps in part even frequently, but be endearingly honest. The experience of pain and the Cross may not render a glowing answer. Following Jesus (that's what we profess to be doing) in suffering may tease out how our faith is being tested and you may hear yourself being less than clear some days. That's OK. The journey and our personal experience of following Jesus is and will be as untidy as was that of the Twelve. We know now Jesus is the Son of God - and one of us. Talk freely and honestly about how he comes across to you. He longs to hear your voice - often.



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#### The Joy of the Gospel

When considering the effect of religion on public life, one must distinguish the different ways in which it is practised. Intellectuals and serious journalists frequently descend to crude and superficial generalisations in speaking of the shortcomings of religion, and often prove incapable of realising that not all believers - or religious leaders - are the same.

Some politicians take advantage of this confusion to justify acts of discrimination. At other times, contempt is shown for writings which reflect religious convictions, overlooking the fact that religious classics can prove meaningful in every age; they have an enduring power to open new horizons, to stimulate thought, to expand the mind and heart. This contempt is due to the myopia of a certain rationalism. Is it reasonable and enlightened to dismiss certain writings simply because they arose in a context of religious belief? These writings include principles which are profoundly humanistic and, albeit tinged with religious symbols and teachings, they have a certain value for reason.

#### *Joy of the Gospel - Para 256*