

## Homily for October 2nd 2017

There's a strong moral flavour to two of our readings today. Ezekiel tells the people of Israel that they have failed to live lives pleasing to God. Their long exile is a consequence of that failure.

Jesus in the Gospel warns us that good words are not enough.

True repentance means changing the way we live. It is quite clear that what we believe must have a direct effect on our daily lives.

But that poses the question: "What do we believe?"

More particularly, "What do we believe about Jesus?"

The great Christian writer C S Lewis wrote a lot about the person of Our Lord. My old friend and former colleague on the staff at Womersley, Canon John Redford, took up C.S.Lewis' ideas in a book with the provocative title "Mad, Bad or God?"

Many people like to think of Jesus as just a great moral teacher, but to do that means cherry picking the bits of the Gospel that suit us.

It means leaving out the "religious bits"!

Of course we can find much wisdom in the Gospels. Jesus is certainly a great teacher, perhaps especially in his parables. But we could find much similar wisdom in the writings of other great religious teachers down the ages, or at least some of them- not all.

If you try to remove the "religious bits" you empty the Gospel of what lies at its heart.

As we read the Gospels we see Jesus gradually revealing himself as the very Son of God.

This is particularly clear in St. John's Gospel where the question occurs again and again:

"What think you of Christ?"

St John's Gospel reaches its climax when Thomas, confronted by the Risen Lord, cries out: "My Lord and My God". As the Gospel unfolds we see Jesus making claims to an equality with God. He claims for himself an authority that only God could claim.

Thus we return to that question: "Mad, Bad or God?". Jesus' claim to be truly one with God demands a response from us. Either he is simply deluded. He thinks that he is God, and is therefore clearly mad, or worse than that, he is actually a fraud. He is making claims that he knows to be false, and if that is the case, then he is bad.

Nothing in the Gospels would support the argument that he is anything but good.

Nothing suggests that he is any way deluded or mad. Quite the contrary.

We are left then with only one alternative; namely he is exactly what he claims to be.

With a sense of awe and wonder we echo the words of Thomas, "My Lord and My God."

When we listen to the moral teaching of Jesus we are not listening simply to a wise teacher, although he is certainly that. We are listening to the voice of God.

For us, then the teaching of the Gospel is not simply good advice but the teaching of him who is The Way, The Truth and the Life."