

## Lent Day 14

Thursday March 1, 2018

**Reading:** John 7:40-52 (53)

<sup>41</sup> Others said, “He is the Messiah.”

Still others asked, “How can the Messiah come from Galilee? <sup>42</sup> Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” <sup>43</sup> Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. <sup>44</sup> Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

### Reflection

Who was Jesus? It’s a question as relevant today as it was more than 2,000 years ago. We each need to wrestle with an answer, just like the Jewish people who heard Jesus and the religious leadership who didn’t. It’s a compelling question because the person of who Jesus was is still in contention today? What do you think? Was he a prophet? Was he the Messiah? How do you decide? It isn’t straight forward and if we pretend it is on either side — God’s chosen one or con artist — we are just fooling ourselves and not taking history seriously. History has looked at the records of this man’s life, his actions, his words and his death and the world (largely) has been split between those who move to faith and those who move to unbelief.

However, more important than the question, “Who was Jesus?” is the question, “Who *is* Jesus, today?” Christians don’t just claim he was a good man, come from God, who did great things and died a righteous death. We claim that he was raised by God as the first born of the age to come. Which means the question isn’t an academic one, it’s one that will change how you live depending on how you answer it. What we see in our text is that those who concluded that he did come from God and was the Messiah were condemned, “The people who don’t know the law are accursed” say the Pharisees and other leaders. Nicodemus wants to follow the law and at least grant him a trial before handing out the verdict and he is bullied into silence. So the way we answer the question isn’t just choosing belief or unbelief, but is relationally risky.

We are products of Modernity and as such we normally agree to a private religion. That is, people in our democratic society can believe whatever they want as long as they keep it private and don’t infringe on the rights of others to believe their convictions. But, Jesus calls us to a public faith and has given us the task of carrying on what he began with Israel — providing people with the knowledge that Jesus is God’s Messiah who fulfilled God’s plans for the world and that based on his work everyone is welcome to enter into that new life. When we do that we are standing with Jesus, “Yes, we’re from Galilee too, because we follow the Galilean.” But what’s the alternative? Leaving? As Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

### Prayer

Holy One of God, help us to stand firm in our identification with you. We know that by holding onto you we must let go of the world. Remind us of your love in those times of difficulty and pour out your Spirit to comfort and strengthen us we pray. Amen.