Today we recall one of the main scenes of the Gospels. It resembles the turning point in a good story. The true identity of the main character is revealed. While we might have heard this Gospel many times before, let’s try to take a fresh look at it, and think about what’s going on.

The setting for today’s Gospel reading is interesting. It’s near the major Roman settlement of Caesarea Philippi, which was named after two famous Roman emperors. It’s as if this Gospel is set on a world stage. What’s being addressed concerns the whole cosmos. Jesus chose this place to ask his disciples the Big Question. Who do they think he really is? And after a few opinions were aired, Jesus turns to Peter for his view. The words are brief and to the point. Furthermore, they are exactly correct. Peter says that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. No doubt, those assembled perked up. This was no small statement from Peter.

The Jews were longing for a Messiah, one sent by God to save them. They were not experiencing good times. They were more or less enslaved to the occupying force of the distant empire of Rome. The Romans persecuted them, and the Romans had already killed many Jews just because they were Jews. So the words of Jesus not only had religious significance, but they also had political ramifications. They were both wonderful and dangerous words.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Prayer

Jesus, Our friend and brother,
Show us the face of God! Show us the Father.
Amen.