

THINKING DAY SERVICE

Readings: Mark 9:2-7; Luke 22:39-46

Jesus – different and the same!

Have you ever played a part in a play? Have you ever been an angel in a nativity play? Did you have a white costume? Did you have white trainers? Did you have tinsel in your hair to make a halo? Was it sparkly? Did you love it? Did your mum and dad give you a big hug at end and tell you that you were special?

The theme of the service today is different and the same; we going to start with these two stories about Jesus and ask the question – is He different from us or the same as us? The first of these stories tells us of these tells us that His clothes became white, 100 times whiter than your angel costume, dazzling white, whiter than anyone could wash them in their whitest washing machine! Jesus went with three of His friends up to the top of a mountain and while He was there the story tells us that He became dazzling white, whiter than anyone could ever imagine and His three friends were amazed at what they saw! He was different! There was more: two people who had been dead for hundreds of years appeared with Jesus; Moses who was leader of God's people for a long time and gave them a way to live; and Elijah who was a prophet and told people "This is what God says". They were standing talking with Jesus – that was different! Then a cloud came down; often in the Bible the cloud comes to show people that God is there and then Jesus' friends heard God's voice tell them that Jesus is God's Son and they should listen to Him! That was different! It was amazing! They has never seen anything like that before! Jesus did other things that were different: He healed people who were sick, He walked across the top of the water, He made storms go away – people saw these things and were amazed! Jesus is different.

I wonder if you've ever had a hard choice to make? I don't mean choosing what colour of socks to wear today! No, this is far harder than that! This is a "How to be a good person" choice! If there was a box of sweets on the table and it was open and I told you that you must not take one, but there is no-one else on the room, would you take one? Part of you says "no, I was told not to" but there's another part that might say "go on, nobody will know!" How do you choose? Jesus is in the garden; He has gone there after his meal; He is praying! He is trying to make a choice. He prays that He might escape the bad things that are coming; the next day is the day He would die! He prays that He might escape! But He also prays that He might do the right thing, to be the right kind of person. He prays and prays; it's agony; the sweat is pouring out of Him, it is so hard. He has to choose. In the end He chooses to stay in the city and let Himself be arrested and killed on the cross because that's what makes Him the Saviour. He is the same as us! This makes Him the same as us: we make choices, these "how to be a good person" choices, and it is not easy; we're not sure what to choose. Part of us wants to choose one way and the other part wants to choose the other way; which way do we go? Just like Jesus had to do. There are other ways in which Jesus same as us: He got tired; maybe He had smelly feet; certainly His feet got dirty; He got angry; He learned to trust God.

Is Jesus different or the same? The answer is both. He is different from us; He is God's Son; we learn to respect and trust Him. He is the same as us, a real human being; that inspires us to respect and trust Him because He knows what my life is like.

Respect!

How do we treat people who are different?

Let me tell you about Tom (that is not his real name!) Tom is 13, and I met him a few weeks ago and he told me his story. Tom was born in the UK, but his family is from a country in North Africa; they came to Edinburgh a while ago and he lives near here and goes to school near here. Tom and his family live in block of four houses, he lives on the top floor, with a neighbour underneath. The neighbour doesn't like Tom and his family because they are different from him; he shouts at Tom when Tom goes past his door on his way to school and on his way home from school; the neighbour comes knocking on their door early in morning or late at night because he says they're annoying him; he shouts at them in the supermarket and threatens to hit Tom's mum. He does all of this to them because they are different from him: they come from a different place, their skin is a different colour, they speak a different language sometimes! Tom finds this very stressful; sometimes it is hard to sleep, he runs to go to school, he runs to come home!

If you were Tom what would you want? If we live next to Tom, how do we treat him? If Tom is in our class at school, how do we treat Tom? We talked about how we are all different, every one of us unique – there is only one of you, only one of me! Am I the only person in room who went to Lanark Grammar School? We are all different! But we are all the same: we are all human beings, all made in God's image, all the same inside. Do we treat each other with respect? Tom gets shouted at by his neighbour because he is different, but he's only different on the outside; inside he is the same as his neighbour – they both can be happy, sad, excited, afraid, just like we all can! Can we show each other respect! If you were Tom what would you want? Tom wants a quiet life, he wants not to be shouted at, he wants for his door not to be hammered, he wants for his mum to be safe. He wants respect!

Some people found Jesus hard to handle because He was different! They didn't always understand the things He did or why He did them; some people thought He was mad! But some became His friends and listened to Him, and walked with Him and watched Him. They saw Him do some amazing things, some good things and they were impressed. They learned to respect Him and more, they learned to love Him and trust Him! This brilliantly different man is just the same as us and knows what life is like for us and is able to help us live our lives in right and good ways; He is worthy of our respect, even our love, even our trust. How do we deal with people who are different?

The Bible challenges us to go a step further: to love other people. Jesus told a story about a man who was beaten up by robbers: they stole his clothes and his things and left him bleeding in the road. In the story, 2 people came along the road and just walked past, doing nothing; the third person came along and helped the man, bandaged his wounds, gave him a drink and took him to the nearest inn and paid for the innkeeper to look after him till he was better; he would pay him more money when he came past again if need be. In the story, Jesus made the man who helped different; this man who was different was the man who helped, who loved who was kind. Jesus' challenge to world is to love, to care, to respect the ways in which we are different and to remember that inside we are all the same and to love, to be patient and kind, and to care for people whoever they are and wherever we meet them. This is hard to do, but this is the best way we can be!