

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Apr 23rd 2013**

Today both the Gospel and the Reading from Acts involve making an identification. In Acts, the followers of Jesus are called Christians for the first time. They are given an identity. In the Gospel, Jesus makes his identity clear.

This week I was listening to the radio while driving. I turned it on in the middle of an interview. I listened for a few minutes, without knowing who was the guest. Eventually, from the context and from the voice, I recognized that Tom Hanks was the person being interviewed. I had a very different understanding of the conversation once I could associate an identity.

There is evidence to suggest that what we perceive is filtered by language. Having a name makes a difference. Jesus is the Christ. His followers are Christians. When we have a name for something we are more likely to take notice. It was clearly a significant revelation when Jesus told the people in the temple who he was. They would not view him in the same way again. Similarly, the distinction of the Gentile-inclusive “Christian” community from a Jewish community of Jesus’ followers creates a very different view of the believers.

I imagine myself as a bystander in the temple in today’s Gospel. I hear this relatively young man making claims. He has the charisma that I would expect from the Christ, but he does not have the outward appearance that I would have anticipated. Although Jesus is well along in his public ministry, I still think that I would have doubts about his claims. I imagine that I would like a sign that he is really the person that he claims to be. For me these signs are still later in the Jesus story.

My prayer today is for the ability to recognize how things are.

I pray that I am not deceived by externals.

Loving God, I ask your forgiveness for judging unjustly.

I ask for grace to better see and hear.

I ask for the wisdom to put aside expectations and to be guided my experience.

I pray for the ability to identify and to embrace your actions in the world today.

Mike Cherney