

Friday of the 5th Week of Lent
 Jeremiah 20:10–13
 Psalm 18:2–7
 John 10:31–42

The well-known Christian apologist C.S. Lewis, whom Bishop Barron has called one of the most influential evangelists of the twentieth century, wrote a book called *Mere Christianity*. One of the most famous passages in this book, which explains why he wrote it, reads as follows:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the foolish thing that people often say about Jesus. "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.¹

In today's Gospel the Jewish leaders are ready to stone him because they think Jesus is a bad man. Their words make this very clear:

It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but because for blasphemy, because you who are only a human, are making yourself God.

But notice they are thinking Jesus is evil because they had concluded he is only a man. But this we cannot do as Lewis so succinctly argues. His logic is called the trilemma. "Jesus is the Lord, a liar, or a lunatic?" Those are the only three options. Well, then, why not liar or lunatic? Almost no one who has read the Gospels can honestly and seriously consider that option. The savviness, the canniness, the human wisdom, the attractiveness of Jesus emerges from the Gospels with unavoidable force to any but the most hardened and prejudiced reader. Jesus has those three qualities that liars and lunatics most conspicuously lack:

¹ Lewis, C.S.. C.S. Lewis Theology Collection: An 11-Book Anthology (Kindle Locations 1028-1031). Mustbe Interactive. Kindle Edition.

1. His practical wisdom, his ability to read human hearts, to understand people and the real, unspoken question behind their words, his ability to heal people's spirits as well as their bodies;
2. His deep and winning love, his passionate compassion, his ability to attract people and make them feel at home and forgiven, his authority, "not as the scribes"; and above all
3. His ability to astonish, his unpredictability, his creativity. Liars and lunatics are all so dull and predictable! No one who knows both the Gospels and human beings can seriously entertain the possibility that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, a bad man.

He is as he says in today's Gospel: "The Father is in me and I am in the Father" All of his works, what John calls Jesus' signs, point to this. Indeed it was for this very reason John wrote this Gospel, as he tells us at the end of chapter 20.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

Thanks be to God that scripture, logic and history have always refuted the claim that Jesus was just a human being. If that were so, he would be either a liar or a lunatic. But he was neither. He is Lord and it is because of this fundamental truth that you and I are here today at this Mass and can say with the psalmist.

I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge.