



Wednesday Prayer

17th Sunday after Pentecost – Who do people say that I am?

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Mark 8: 27-30

These verses from the Gospel of Mark take on a whole new perspective when considered through the lens of youth and social media. It’s a bit strange to think of Jesus’ question reframed in this way, right? What would people have said about him and his ways in today’s world of instant communication that spreads across communities, states and the entire world in a matter of minutes? And his wishes to “not tell anyone about him”? Not a chance.

Young people are working on and developing into who they are. We’ve all been through this, yet most who are reading this probably had the luxury of developing without the pressures of the social media and gaming worlds. The pressures of “Who do people say that I am?” when online bullying, “perfect” posts, and addictive games and apps play a central role in so many young people’s lives. Jesus answers back to the disciples, “Who do *you* say that I am?” Maybe there’s an opening for us to share (over and over again) that they are valued, they are enough just as they are, they are loved unconditionally, they are a beloved child of God.

There’s another viewpoint I’ve recently heard about where young people are receiving the *support* they need through social media. Some are finding safe sites where they can share their mental health struggles and receive support from one another. “*Research is recognizing that peer support can be an important first step in overcoming barriers to care, including social isolation, mistrust of formal health care, and difficult home environments and other challenging situations.*” One young adult shares that for years she was told she’s just a moody teenager, she’s acting out for attention, etc. Her journey to receiving support as a bipolar individual started with a connection to people whose stories sounded like hers on YouTube and social media – “*I didn’t feel as alone. I felt like someone saw me.*”¹

To learn more and engage to support youth’s mental wellness, Cherish All Children will be partnering with Faith Lutheran Church to host a screening of [Screenagers Next Chapter: Addressing Youth Mental Health in the Digital Age](#). Join us to explore solutions together!

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:14

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.

¹Hider, J. (2024, May). Stand by me. On TikTok and on campus, students with mental health struggles are finding support among each other. *Rotary Magazine*, vol. 202, number 11.