

Get the children to sit on rungs of a ladder. Get them to imagine the ladder is a tree. In days of my youth, at youth group we had this strange debate that seemed to last quite some time (or it seemed like it). When you climb a tree and sit (or hang) amongst the leaves and branches do you consider yourself to Up, In or On the tree?

In a very Anglican way, I would argue that all are correct, but the use of In could mean inside the wooden trunk, or On means sitting literally on top of the canopy like we see angels sitting on top of clouds. Up then is the only 'correct' answer.

The language that we use can be confusing – really confusing, and whilst Jesus spoke Aramaic as a language, his words for us were recorded in Greek, which is a little different from the Greek language of today, and we of course have the Gospel translated into English.

But sometimes no matter how much you explain to some people, using many different words, they may never actually understand (or want to understand) what you are saying; which is why last week we talked about living out the Gospel, rather than trying to explain it.

Last week Peter said that Jesus was the Messiah, and Jesus told Peter that the church was to be founded on him and he had the keys of God's kingdom. But that was last week. This reading is the very next part of the story!

Today we hear about Jesus showing (not telling) the disciples about what was going to happen in Jerusalem (now Good Friday & Easter).

But Peter, takes Jesus aside and said, don't do it – I don't want you to go – I like you here and enjoy what you have to say! But listen to what Jesus says to Peter then: 'Get behind me Satan'. That's right. Jesus seems to be calling Peter the devil, except that he isn't, because Peter is not the devil.

Peter is just being selfish and doesn't understand what God is doing in Jesus: he doesn't understand what is to come; he doesn't yet understand what the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of God is and will be about. Not only this, but in Peter's misunderstanding and encouraging Jesus to be selfish, he is tempting Jesus in the same way Jesus was tempted right back at the start of his ministry – after his baptism when he went into the wilderness for 40 days.

Temptation is something external to us, it isn't a physical aspect of the world, but it is something that is real, that pushes or pulls us towards an action. The Jewish people identified these types of 'forces' angels, and Satan is the force of temptation. Our problem is that in Aramaic, satan isn't the name of an angel, but rather a description that means 'adversary'. It is only the translation to Greek that it seems to adopt the value of a noun, and so a name.

So originally, Peter hasn't being called the Devil, but rather Jesus' adversary, offering a different [and less effective] option for doing God's work.

So be careful in the words that you use. Because they don't always mean to others what you intend. Instead, show your dedication to God in the actions you take. Show your faith in life.

## **Matthew 16:21-28 (NRSV from bible.oremus.org)**

**Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection** Matthew 16:21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' <sup>23</sup>But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

**The Cross and Self-Denial** <sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

<sup>27</sup> 'For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. <sup>28</sup>Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'