

## A better story

### Notes on the Bible readings

- This week's events take place where Caesar is proclaimed to be God. For Jews, this is a repugnant, blasphemous place to go to. But Jesus comes here to ask pointedly political questions about his identity.

- In this charged atmosphere, Jesus asks his disciples who they think he is. Peter shoots back, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' In the shadow of the walls of the seat of government, this was dangerous talk; if Peter is saying that Jesus is Lord, then he is saying that Caesar is not!

- Throughout history, empires have told the same story: they all celebrate power and self-interest, and crush anyone who opposes them. But there is an alternative story to be told: one that champions forgiveness, compassion and self-sacrifice. This is the agenda loosed by Jesus and his followers. Jesus offers something different from the narrative of power and self-interest: a better story than the one told by Caesar and other earthly empires.

- With the confession that Jesus is the Messiah, we break free from a system that oppresses us. It is a statement of liberation. How can we proclaim afresh that message of liberation to those oppressed today?

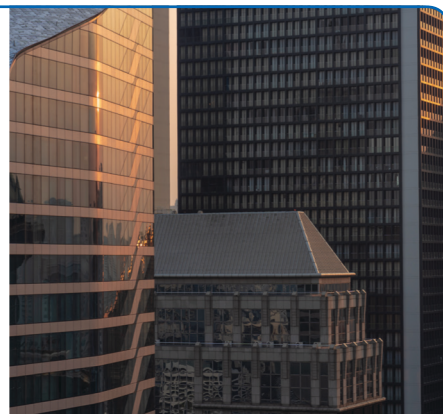
### What's the story?

Watch some adverts on TV or the internet. What story is each advert telling? Do you find it credible or trustworthy? How could you brief someone who makes adverts to advertise what Jesus offers?

FREE [worship at home](https://www.rootsontheweb.com) resources, including up-to-the-minute reflection on this week's Bible reading, available at: [www.rootsontheweb.com](https://www.rootsontheweb.com)

### Questions for reflection

- ▶ How might this image be representative of things we can put our trust in?
- ▶ What overshadows some of the stories you live by?
- ▶ What overshadows some of what you can put your trust in?



### A prayer of adoration

*Lord God, we come before you in humble adoration. How blessed are we that the one who holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven is the one who has the key to our hearts. Thank you, God, for the privilege of being part of the amazing story of faith that sustained our ancestors. Thank you, God, that we know our future is safe with you.*  
Amen.

### A prayer for others

*We pray for people who struggle with their faith: through self-doubt, through difficult circumstances, through bad things happening, through being led astray, by wanting fame and fortune.*

*We pray for people who feel in the dark, locked in a situation where they can find no answer, that they might come to understand that you are the key to everything they need.*

*We pray for ourselves: when we are in difficult situations, when we try to unlock doors that aren't ours to unlock, when we don't focus on the kingdom, when we don't share our story.*  
Amen.

### A personal prayer

*Mighty God, I think about the keys I hold. Each one shows a responsibility of some kind. Thank you for all that you entrust me with. Thank you most of all for Jesus, who gives me the keys of the kingdom.*  
Amen.

### Live your faith

Keep a personal tally of things you do this week that might be considered 'self-giving' or, conversely, 'self-preserving'. How balanced is your personal 'scale'?