

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Life's Most Important Question
Mark 8:27-33

1. THE JOURNEY: Jesus leads his disciples to the cross.

The first half of Mark's Gospel is like being at the Daytona 500 speed race. The pace is blistering, crowds are multiplying, miracles are everywhere and to everyone, the people want to force Jesus to be their king, religious leaders are growing in their plot to kill, and the disciples are both more convinced and more confused concerning Jesus!

A lot has happened over the first 8 chapters of Mark. But everything Jesus did, and every story Mark tells establishes one thing: Jesus Christ is the Son of God who has all authority.

- Authority over Satan and His demons
- Authority as the Teacher and Preacher of God's Word
- Authority to forgive sin
- Authority over creation, where the winds and waves obey him
- Authority over all sickness and disease
- Authority to bestow his authority even upon his disciples

To this point in Mark's gospel, Jesus' authority has been made clear, but the cross has yet to be revealed. But rest assure, the cross of Christ will not be delayed or denied. Jesus is about to begin his journey to the cross and His disciples will follow.

Our passage this morning is the crux, the pivot, the literal centerpiece of the sixteen chapters in Mark's Gospel. These verses hold the long-awaited confession by the disciples that Jesus is the Messiah, but it also holds a new revelation of How the Messiah will save.

Mark 8:27-33 (ESV)

And 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?"²⁸ And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets."²⁹ And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

From the shores of Galilee, the disciples follow Jesus north for a 30-mile trek to the foot of Mount Hermon. They will end in Caesarea Philippi, originally named Paneas, after the Greek deity Pan (a mythological half-goat, half-man famed for flute-playing).

The abundant water supply made the area very fertile, lush, and beautiful. A major source of the River Jordan came from this area. This area has a grotto, a cave, that was believed to be the entrance to the underworld. Also referred to as “the Gates of Hell.” Detestable acts were done here to satisfy the gods of the underworld. Sacrifices would be thrown into the cave to appease the underworld gods.

It is as if Jesus takes his disciples to the extreme northern border of the promised land to the heart of pagan worship to ask them life’s most important question, and then turns his face like flint and marches resolutely to the cross.

2.THE QUESTION: Jesus asks questions of the heart.

As they were on their way to Caesarea Phillipi, Jesus began with what others had concluded about Him. Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

The verb asks is in the imperfect tense, meaning that Jesus didn’t just ask once but rather, he asked repeatedly. The disciples would have heard the chatter, whispers, speculations, and rumors. They would have been the ones pulled aside by the crowds along the way and confronted to clarify Jesus’ identity. I’m sure the people sometimes said the same things the disciples thought.

They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say one of the prophets.” These people heard his teaching, witnessed his power, and experienced his healing. Yet they concluded that Jesus was just a 2.0 version of their forefathers. He was simply the next in the long line of prophets.

All of these answers come from unbelief’s blindness. The Son of God stands before them, but they cannot see or hear. Jesus stands above every other. None compared to him. Every prophet, priest, and king in the Old Testament anointed before the Lord served as a preparation to recognize the coming Messiah. None of them were the Messiah, but each was a forerunner and type of the Son of God coming to save. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, and David...all pointed to the Promised, Anointed One, Jesus.

The people saw Jesus as one standing in the shadow of their forefathers and were blind to the fact that Jesus was the reality, and their forefathers were the ones standing in His shadow.

Before judging people so quickly, let’s be honest about our hearts. Our flesh is also prone to worship the shadow of Christ instead of His reality. We see the masterpiece of the sunset and simply overlook the Creator. We experience His grace daily and easily assume the Giver. We taste his provision and forget to thank the Provider.

Jesus is not allowing the belief/unbelief of others to become the foundation of the disciple's hearts. Before he asks them the same question, He must first expose and cleanse their minds of the residue of other's unbelief.

What about you? How much of what you believe is based on the opinions and beliefs of others? Here is what is true. When we stand before the Lord one day, we will stand without family and friends beside us. We either stand in Christ or without Christ. His testimony concerning our lives will be the only thing that matters.

This might first sound scary, standing alone before the holiness of God. But it will be the place of greatest peace for those who know and are known by Christ!

ALL I HAVE IS CHRIST

... I once was lost in darkest night, Yet thought I knew the way
The sin that promised joy and life had led me to the grave
... I had no hope that You would own
A rebel to Your will, and if You had not loved me first
I would refuse You still
... But as I ran my hell-bound race indifferent to the cost
You looked upon my helpless state and led me to the cross
... And I beheld God's love displayed
You suffered in my place You bore the wrath reserved for me
Now all I know is grace
... Hallelujah, all I have is Christ. Hallelujah, Jesus is my life.

Now Jesus turns his attention away from all the others and to the 12 men who have been set apart as His disciples. As they continued to walk toward Caesarea Philippi, he asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter speaks quickly on behalf of all the disciples, "You are the Christ".

"The Christ" in Greek is the same as "the Messiah" in Hebrew and both mean "the anointed one." Peter is saying, "Jesus, you are God's anointed Messiah." Peter and the other disciples' eyes were opened by God the Father to see and believe that Jesus was God's promised, anointed One.

Their eyes now saw and lips confessed that:

a. Jesus, You are God's Promised, Anointed One from the seed of Abraham
Galatians 3:8 (ESV) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."

b. Jesus, You are God's Promised, Anointed One from the tribe of Judah
Genesis 49:10 (ESV) 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

c. Jesus, You are God's Promised, Anointed One from the house of David
Jeremiah 23:5–6 (ESV) "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

But Jesus follows the disciple's awakening with strictly charging them to tell no one about Him. Why? They knew only in part. Just when the disciples, especially Peter, thought all the puzzle pieces were in front of them, Jesus threw a bombshell into the discussion.

3. THE REVELATION: Jesus reveals Himself plainly, persistently, & without compromise.

Jesus reveals the shocking mystery of the Messiah, "The Conquering King is also the Suffering Servant." Jesus has spoken in parables for 2 years. But now He reveals his mission plainly to His disciples. It is time for them to hear what is about to happen.

- the Son of Man must suffer many things
- the Son of Man must be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes
- the Son of Man must be killed,
- the Son of Man will rise again after three days.

Peter is stunned. He is hearing something that makes no sense to him. How can our King Conquer if he must suffer, be rejected, and die? Peter must have been screaming within himself, "No! It cannot be! You are our promised deliverer. You are our Savior who will overthrow oppressive Rome and establish an indestructible kingdom."

Jesus quickly rebukes Peter,

Mark 8:33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Jesus doesn't condemn Peter, but he does strongly correct. Remember this is a 30-mile, 10 hour by foot, trek. I can imagine Jesus following his rebuke with teaching Peter and the disciples that He is the man of sorrows in Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:3-7

He was despised and rejected^[b] by men, a man of sorrows^[c] and acquainted with^[d] grief;^[e] and as one from whom men hide their faces^[f] he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone

astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

I can hear Jesus saying, “Peter, that’s me. I am the suffering servant who is also the conquering King. It has always been me. Trust me that my Kingdom will be established because of, not in spite of, my death. For without my wounds there is no peace nor healing for you. I will not compromise WHO I am, WHY I came, or WHAT I must do.

Jesus would persistently repeat this same revelation of his suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection to his disciples in Mark 9 and 10. Each time they couldn’t grasp what Jesus was saying.

I relate to Peter. Often time my stumbling block of faith is NOT WHO Jesus is. I see Him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Creator. The Sovereign one. Rather it is the HOW of Jesus.

I find myself, like Peter, screaming, “No! Lord, not that way. Not the way requiring suffering, rejection, and even death.” I want an easier way, a less painful way. My flesh will demand, “I want a way that does not involve the cross!”

To this, Jesus says to me, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

A mind set on the things of the flesh:

1. Argues with God
2. Avoids the Cross
3. Turns away from Jesus

A mind set on the things of God:

1. Agrees with God
2. Embraces the Cross
3. Follows Jesus

Colossians 3:1-3

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

So, I ask you your life’s greatest question, “Who do you say Jesus is?” Do you believe Jesus is the promised Suffering Servant, that He bore your grief, that He carried your sorrows, that He was pierced for your iniquities., that He was the lamb slain for your sins? Do you believe Jesus is the promised Conquering King, that He conquered death?

Daniel 7:13-14

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Do you believe Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah?