

Mark 8:27-39

The Way of The Cross

This morning's gospel occurs halfway through Mark's gospel. Up to this point Jesus has been busy ushering in the of the Kingdom of God by preaching great sermons, casting out demons, healing the sick, walking on water, calming the sea and wind, feeding 5,000 with 5 loaves and two fish, and forgiving sins.

At this point Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" The people have had their questions about Jesus. Who is this, even the demons obey? Who is this that the wind and the sea obey? He is Beelzubaal. No question mark. Is this not the carpenter, son of Mary? John the Baptist raised from the dead. He is Elijah. No one gets it. Except the demons who get cast out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus, Son of the Most High God!"

When Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do you say that I am? I imagine all of heaven waits silently. How are they going to answer? Peter answers, you are the Messiah. In heaven the angels begin dancing, the choir breaks into song, and confetti begins flying. They get it! "You are the Messiah."

Not so fast. Then Jesus tells His disciples what must happen. "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 on the third day rise." Jesus said this plainly. No earthly stories with a heavenly meanings. No symbolism. He gave it to them straight. He must, Mark reports. There is no getting around it. There will be no compromise with Jesus' mission to save us..The cross is the only way..

We might bristle at that little word, "must," like Peter who just got it right about Jesus being the Messiah, and begin thinking why we "must not. Not Jesus. He delights in doing what the Father says. He must even if it means suffering and death and being raised from the dead.

We need to appreciate Jesus' acceptance of what He must do. Because we have sinned against God. Jesus must be rejected because there are times we have rejected God. He must die because we have chosen the way of death over life. He must rise again because He is without sin and death cannot hold Him

Either Jesus must bear the punishment for our sin or you and I must bear the punishment. He must rise from the dead or you and I will never be raised from the dead. Jesus must or we will never have hope.

This is what it means to be the Christ. In Mark's Gospel we get no clues about Jesus' suffering and death until now. Matthew gives us Herod's plot to kill the baby Jesus. Luke gives Simeon's a sword shall pierce your soul to Mary. In Mark Jesus drops this predictions like a bomb. Peter and the disciples never saw coming. "Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes Him." This shall never happen to you. And just like that all the music, singing and confetti throwing comes to a screeching halt. Peter does not get it. Peter is rebuking Jesus for what He must do for us and or salvation.

No wonder Jesus had told His disciples not to say anything. No preaching is better than false preaching. "Jesus rebukes Peter, Get behind me Satan. You are not setting your minds on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Now that is always our great challenge for us who follow Jesus. The the things of man, the applause,

the accolades, the honors, the power, success of this world are so alluring. A home to come home and the nicer the better. Money to pay the bills, and much more. Anything wrong with that? I suppose not, but if all these over ride your relationship with God then there is problem. However the things of God can be those daily chores and activities that are lived out according to God's Word and along with a living hope in Jesus Christ.

Then Jesus talks about those who would come after Him. If it is by dying that Jesus is the Christ, then it is by dying that we become Christians. I think that is why Peter objected. So Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Peter and everyone who heard this knew what that meant. There were crosses everywhere that Romans used for executions.

Then Jesus continues: "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it." Drop the cross and run to save yourself actually leads to death. To save your life? Lose it. Lose it for Jesus' sake, like Jesus did, you receive new life that death cannot end.

In our lives as Jesus' followers this losing and gaining life looks like this:

1. Dying and rising to new life with Christ is in Holy Baptism. It is where you died to the old sinful life and rose to the new life in Christ. It where the cross was applied to you. Not just any cross. Not a cross of execution, but the cross of Christ which is the saving cross.
2. In Confession, each and everyday admitting to God we are sinners. We do not need rebaptism, only return to the first baptism where all started.

With faith to believe the promises Jesus won for you this life with Jesus means

3. Losing your pride to humble yourself before others.
4. Losing your right for revenge so that you are free to forgive.
5. Losing your stuff to share with those in need.
6. Losing your time to be there for others in need and more prayer.
7. Losing all, yet really losing nothing at all, but a life of joy.

Rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, Rejoicing in our sufferings. Rejoicing in God through Jesus Christ. We rejoice in our deeds and in our life because of the new in Christ. Because God's love has been poured into your hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. The spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and goodness faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

This comes all through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And through our death and resurrection with Him. Come let walk with Jesus, crucified and risen and He will strengthen you.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.