

+ IN THE NAME OF JESUS +

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
The Second Sunday in Lent**

February 25, 2024

MARK 8:27-38

Let's call it their m_____ -t_____ exam. Their teacher had administered it to them very suddenly and unannounced, just as it comes to us. For some time now, the disciples had been following and learning from Jesus. But this had been during that time in His ministry when He was wildly p_____. Crowds flocked to see Him; they had to tear a roof off a house to get their sick friend near to Him. Now, those days were _____. Jesus had set His face toward Jerusalem, and to what must h*appen to Him there. That would be the disciples' f_____ e_____; so now was a good time to put to them the only question that finally matters in life:

“WHAT DO YOU THINK OF JESUS?”

I. WHO DO YOU THINK HE IS?

“What are people saying about Me?”, Jesus asked His disciples. It was a simple question, for how you answer it can't be _____. You may even think you are doing Him a favor by answering it. So they answered: “_____ the Baptist; and others say, E_____; and others, one of the p_____.” For most people, such opinions would be the highest of c_____, as even Jesus shows when He says: “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist” (Mt 11:11).

A. The Runner-Up?

But in this case, such opinions were woefully i_____. John and Elijah were rightly held in high esteem by Israel, but that esteem was essentially b_____ from the greater One they were sent to point ahead to. In His last word to His Old Testament people some 400 years before Christ, God had said: “Behold, I will send you _____ the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of

utter destruction” (Mal 4:5-6). _____ was to usher in the great Messianic age. That's why people asked _____, “Are you Elijah?” (Jn 1:21).

So, these popular opinions of Jesus fell woefully sh_____. People viewed Him as a sign that God's Kingdom would come s_____, failing (refusing) to see that in Him, God's Kingdom has _____. He _____ God's Kingdom. But He was “runner-up” in their hearts, and they waited for Him the way people wait for the national anthem as a signal that the “r_____ event” is about to begin.

B. The Christ!

So, that's what people “out there” were saying. But what about the disciples? Jesus looked them in the eye: “But you, who do **you** say I am?” That's the question. “What do **you** think of Jesus?” Speaking for them all, Peter answered: “You are the Christ!” You're the One, Jesus! Not r_____ -u_____, but the One chosen and sent by _____. Not one more in that long line of p_____, but the very One all those prophets had pointed ahead to. Not the b_____ man, but the b_____; Not the means to an end, but the _____ itself!

So far, so good, Peter! We have much to learn from his great confession! Too often, Jesus is r_____ -u_____ in our hearts. We treat Him as the means to an end, not the end itself. We want Jesus to give us something e_____, and if He won't do that, the excitement wears off. Peter's confession teaches us the only right answer to the only question that finally matters in life, “What do you think of Jesus?” “You're the One, Jesus! You are the Christ! I hope for nothing m_____ beside You; and I will settle for nothing l_____!”

II. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS HIS WORK?

But there is a second question that is equally important: “What do you think is His work?” Peter's confession, good and true as it was, lacked m_____. He knew rightly Who Jesus was, but he had failed to grasp what that m_____ - both for Jesus, and for anyone who would f_____ Him.

With Peter's great confession, Jesus starts to teach His disciples what it meant that He is the Christ, and what it means to be the Christ's d_____. “[H]e 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" (v 31).

A. The Road to Glory?

These words were as un_____ to the disciples as they are still to us. Who chooses the way of s_____? If it happens, we grumble our way through it, but choose it? Never! And if we don't choose it for us, then we certainly don't choose it for our _____. He should enjoy the finest life has to offer!

It is sadly amusing to picture what happens next. Peter steers Jesus off to the side to quietly c_____ his teacher's "misguided" notions. Can we imagine a greater arrogance? The student corrects the Teacher? The sinner admonishes the s_____. O_____? The creature tries to reshape his C_____.? Jesus took Peter's words for what they were: A Satanic t_____ designed to divert Him from the saving work God had sent Him to accomplish. "Get behind Me, Satan! You are blocking my way to the _____. Those are not God's thoughts, but man's."

B. The Road through Suffering and Death!

Mankind has never been good of thinking like _____. So, remember this as you address the question, "What do you think of Jesus?" What we think of Him is w_____ if it does not match what God s_____ of Him. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him!"

1. A Cross for Himself

Listen to Him when He tells you about a cross for _____. That is precisely what marks His Messiahship as g_____. We, of course, don't think that way. We would rather follow a p_____ Messiah who parades through the streets with excited crowds falling in line behind Him as He leads them straight to the portals of h_____. It's a very tempting vision! But see it for what it is – the temptation of Satan! That vision is a figment of our sinful imaginations. But we want to believe it! It is very fl_____.! It tells us heaven is ours without r_____, without obedience, without f_____, without entrusting

ourselves again to the Creator's care. But remove faith, obedience, and love from heaven and you are left with pure _____!

Jesus did not come to l_____ us to heaven. Jesus _____ heaven. Jesus is *Immanuel*, God with us. He came to render the obedience we could not, to fully trust the God we had r_____, to live out the life of repentance, even to be our s_____. "For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The cross was His m_____.

2. A Cross for His Disciple

And the cross, likewise, is our discipleship. To take up the cross is to give up the thing most d_____ to us – concern for s_____ and for our l_____. Discipleship is the call to give these things back Him to Whom they properly belong – our God and Creator. He created us, and He will s_____ us better than we can ever supply ourselves. In fact, He has already done so – in _____, our _____.

What do you think of Jesus?

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE ✠ SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

FOR REFLECTION:

1. What was it about peoples' ideas about who Jesus was inadequate? In what ways to people make a similar mistake today?
2. In what way did Peter have it right? In what way was he wrong?
3. Why do we not like to listen to Jesus' "cross" talk? Why is it necessary?