



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Very Heart of Christianity

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Mark 8:27-33

Clint Pressley

27 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."

(Pastor prays)

At 6,684 feet, Mount Mitchell is the highest peak in North Carolina as well as the highest peak this side of the Mississippi River. If you make it to the top using the trail, when you finally get there, sit down and look. The Gospel of Mark is like a trail going up Mount Mitchell where we've been climbing for ten months, and in this passage we have come to the peak. After this passage, we will start back down the trail that will take us to the Valley of the Shadow of Death and to the cross. But today, we are going to rest a minute on this peak and hear all that Mark has to tell us about Jesus. That's what he has been doing all along. In Mark 1:1 he says, "Jesus Christ, the son of God." In Mark 1:11, God the Father says, "you are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." The demons know who He is. In Mark 1:24, they call him the Holy One of God.

In Mark 3:14, they say, “you are the Son of God.” And in Mark 5:17 the demons say, “Jesus, Son of the Most High God.” We will see later on a Roman soldier in Mark 15:39 saying, “surely this man was the Son of God.” So we’ve got it that Jesus is the Son of God. Now, Mark takes us right to the top with a question from Jesus that is so profound that it becomes the very heart and heartbeat of Christianity, and I’m going to use it as my theme.

Who Do You Say Jesus Is?

Let’s walk through the story and we’ll come back and make some application. Verse 27 tells us that Jesus walked with His disciples. They’ve come from Bethesda—that’s the town they’re walking from. They’re gonna walk 25 miles, almost a marathon. If you’re a marathon runner, that’s 26 miles. So, 25 miles Jesus is walking with the disciples, and they’ve got a lot to talk about. They’re going to a place called Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi was named by Philip. He includes Caesar’s name just to make sure he will not make the boss mad. So Caesar is one name, and then Philippi. The town was a Pagan town. The Romans had established it initially and named it Pan after one of their gods. They would have human sacrifices and all kinds of things you wouldn’t talk about. They are walking to this terrible place and Jesus, along the way, asks, “What are the people saying?” Crowds have been following them. He’s been healing people, and casting out demons, so He asked them, “What do the crowds say about me?” And they come up with several good answers.

You have Matthew 16 where there is a fuller account. You can read this story in Luke, as well. But here in verse 28, they tell Him that, well, some people are saying He’s John the Baptist. That’s what Herod thought, that John the Baptist had come back from the dead. So some people are perpetuating that rumor. Some think He’s Elijah. Micah said that Elijah was going to come back, and so some think He is the fulfillment of Elijah. And then some people think He is one of the prophets. Matthew tells us that they also said that they think He might be Jeremiah. So it’s a very positive thing. They are saying all of these good things about Him. And then Jesus stops them there, and that’s where He asks a very personal, pointed question. It’s one that we all have to answer. He said to them, “But who do *you* say that I am?”

Three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke (John doesn't have this story)—these three have this question, and it's the emphatic *you*. Who do *you* say I am? If you're in middle school, this is for you: Who do you say that I am? Then, the great confession you have there is Peter, who is the spokesperson for all of the disciples. He speaks up—as he oftentimes does. He is the leader, and Peter answered in verse 29, “You are the Christ, You are the Messiah.” That's what that word means: you are the Anointed One. The Jews were looking for the one to come that would be the Leader and Savior. Jesus is it. In fact, he says it in Matthew, “you are the Christ, you are the Son of the Living God.” It's a full statement. It is the great confession right here, truncated a little bit by Mark. Jesus tells them to not tell anybody. Once Peter said, “you're the Christ,” Jesus sees that they have identified Him, but they don't have the whole story yet.

In verse 30, Jesus tells them to not tell people this. And then in verse 31, Jesus opened up for the very first time. They've not heard this story yet. You know, we look back and we know what happened to Jesus, but they had no idea in the Gospel of Mark. We've been climbing up this mountain, and each step we get this bigger view of Jesus. He's healing, He's preaching, He's doing miracles, He's casting out demons. The crowds are with them. He is the Messiah. Then in verse 31, He changes everything they know. Notice what He says. He began to teach them that the Son of Man—that is a theological statement that is tied to Daniel chapter eight—must suffer many things. He must be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes. He must be killed. And after three days, He must rise again. Well, you can imagine the disciples are dumbfounded. They've not heard anything like this. This is brand new. Now, Jesus will teach this three more times, but this is the first time they've heard it. They've never conceived that a Messiah would go through such things.

The text says in verse 32 that Jesus has said this plainly. He's not teaching a parable, He told it straight. But in verse 32, Peter took Him aside. You don't want to embarrass the boss, who is Jesus, the Rabbi. So let's take Him aside to rebuke Him in a way that everybody doesn't see it. But Peter thinks Jesus

needs to be rebuked, because if you know anything about theology and Jesus, you understand that the Christ is going to rule. And so the text says that Peter—can you imagine the audacity of Peter—he pulls Jesus aside and rebukes Him. It's the same word used to describe what Jesus did with the demons, *rebuked*. It is a terrible thing. Peter pulls Jesus aside, and he rebukes Him. But in verse 33, Jesus is standing there taking it from Peter, and He sees the disciples are witnessing it. He looks over at those guys, and He speaks in such a way that they hear. Jesus rebuked Peter, and this is what He said to him, "Peter, you are acting like the devil. You are Satan."

I've always wondered. I mean we have just come off the highest point of Peter's apostolic life when he's asked, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter says, "You are the Christ. You are the Son of the living God." Over in Matthew, Matthew tells us that Jesus said to him, "Flesh and blood didn't give you this, God the Father gave this to you." And now, just a little bit later, Jesus is saying, "Get behind me, Satan." Why Satan? Why did Jesus call Peter Satan? Why couldn't He just have said, "Peter, you're wrong." But Jesus called him Satan. Do you remember Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness in the beginning of Mark? Part of the temptation was for Jesus to take glory without going to the cross. Now, in verse 31, Jesus has just explained He's got to go through the cross to be glorified, and Peter says *no*. And Jesus tells him that Peter is in league with the devil if he stands in front of the cross. Get your mind off earthly things, Peter. You get your mind on the things of God.

With that in mind, let's go back, and let's make some application. What are the things that we can take away from this story? Let me give you three or four. Here's the first one, number one:

Being Positive About Jesus Is Not Enough

It's not enough to think positive things about Jesus, to have a nice thing to say about Jesus. Jesus asked in verses 27 and 28, "What are the regular people saying? What are the population—what is the regular, normal person that has not been close—what do they say about me?" And everything they offered up, including how it's described in Matthew when Jeremiah is

included, all of them are positive. Jeremiah was positive, Elijah, John the Baptist, or one of the prophets, all of those are positive statements. And in the day and time we live in, it's not enough to be positive about Jesus. Most other religions are positive about Jesus. Islam is in the news right now with all that's happening in Israel and on the Gaza strip, with Hamas and all of the riots that are breaking out. We see them happening in New York and London. They would all say Jesus was a prophet. Hindus would say Jesus is a holy man. A Buddhist would say Jesus is an enlightened guru, and even someone that is irreligious would be willing to say Jesus is a really good moral teacher. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, they've got His name right in the name of their church. What do they think about Jesus? They would see Him as coming from a Heavenly Father and a heavenly mother, a man that would become a god. That gets twisted. The Jehovah's Witnesses, when they walk up your driveway, they're going to say positive things about Jesus, but what they believe is that He was a created being. He was the Archangel Michael before the physical world was created, and then it gets twisted.

All of those are positive things, but they're absolutely wrong. You see being positive about Jesus, it's not enough. We need to be clear when we talk about the gospel. We want to be clear about who Jesus is. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—He is the second person of the Trinity. The gospel is that God is holy and we are sinners, and Jesus is the mediator—the God-Man—the one that God has given us to live perfectly, and to die on the cross in the place of sinners. He is the one who is raised from the dead victoriously, and the promise is that if any one of you believe in that Jesus, you will be saved.

What do we believe about Jesus? We believe that from the very beginning, He is the second person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is, as the Nicene Creed would say, the Son of God. We believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified in the place of sinners, was dead and buried. And in three days, God raised Him from the dead. That Jesus now has ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. And one day, He will come again for His Church. That is the clear picture of who Jesus is. Being positive about Jesus is not

enough. Let's use the word *clear*, then, to make a second point, number two:

Being Clear on Jesus Is a Must

In a world where things are so mixed up, we must be clear. Join me there in verses 29 and 30. He asked them, "But who do *you* say that I am?" Do you see the word *you*? It's emphatic. In all three Gospels, it's emphatic. Who do *you*—personally? It is directly at you. You can't borrow it from your parents. And if you're a student, now's the time. Who do you, at 14-years-old, who do *you* say Jesus is? Peter speaks up. He is the spokesman for the group, and he makes the great confession right here. It's truncated here, but in Matthew 16 it says, "You are the Christ. You are the Son of the living God." It's a beautiful confession, and it's true. In fact, Jesus was saying in Matthew 16, "God gave this to you."

Here's where Mark has been taking us; Jesus is not only the Son of God, but He is the Christ of God, the Messiah of God, the Savior of God. There are a couple of things about this that we need to be very clear on when we talk about Jesus. We need to be clear on how we understand and think through what He did; Who is He and what did He do? We also need to see that it's like what Jesus says about Peter in Matthew 16, that this is not from flesh and blood. This is not something you made-up, Peter. This was given to you by God. We're clear that this is something spiritual. We are clear that if conversion happens, it's not just you deciding you're going to change. There's something that goes on from taking you from being dead to being alive. It's the Holy Spirit. What do we pray for when we pray for our lost friends? We pray that God would move in them in such a way that their eyes would be open to see the goodness of God in Jesus. You have this picture here of being clear and God-given, but there's something else here.

I find it fascinating what Jesus does here in verse 30. Peter has made the great confession: "You are the Christ." Matthew tells us he says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," so let's start telling everybody. But Jesus tells them—He strictly charges them—to not tell anybody about this. Because Peter has made the great confession that Jesus is the Messiah, but Peter's

understanding of Messiah, as we'll see in a few moments, is completely off-track. It has not been developed. Something that must happen is our understanding of God must continue to grow. Our understanding of Christ must continue to expand. The disciples in verse 30 did not yet have the whole story. So, for the very first time, in verse 31, they're getting ready to get the whole story. This gives me a third point, number three:

In a world where things are so mixed up, we must be clear and...

We Need the Whole Gospel

We don't need a truncated gospel. We have a clear picture of what our condition is before Christ. What is it that God has? What does the gospel mean? Why did Christ come? Who is He? And in verse 31, Jesus explains the whole gospel for the very first time in the book of Mark. In fact, if you wanted to do an outline, you could just use the phrases in verse 31 that Jesus gives us. I'll give them to you. Here's the first one: *Son of Man*. *The Son of Man* is a theological statement. It is a phrase that Jesus uses about Himself. It is His favorite phrase when He talks about Himself. He calls Himself the Son of Man 81 times in the Gospels. 81 times. He's the only one to call Himself the Son of Man. He does that because of what Daniel has done. In Daniel chapter eight, when he pictures a man who has glory, and who will suffer, Daniel calls that man the *Son of Man*. The Son of Man. Another word you might want to use as an outline is the word *must*. The Son of Man *must*. That word, *must*, tells us that this is God's eternal plan from the foundation of the world. That the gospel of Jesus is not something God came up with to save people when He saw how lost they were. Don't think that God looked down the road and saw that people are going to go off the rails so He needed to come up with a plan that's going to save them. The foundation of the world was laid, and the gospel was on the heart of God from the very beginning. Peter preaches this in Acts 2:23. Peter says that Jesus is delivered up according to the definite plan and the foreknowledge of God. He was crucified and killed at the hands of evil men. You see, the cross that Jesus will go to is not an accident. Jesus is not a martyr. Jesus goes to the cross as Savior. This is part of God's divine

plan, and this is what Jesus is teaching them. You need to understand. I am the Son of Man and this *must* happen.

What must happen? I want to pull out the phrase, *suffer many things*. He tells the disciples that the Son of Man must suffer many things. This does not resonate with what it means to be a Messiah. You can probably, even in your mind, see Peter shaking his head. This is not right. Jesus says the Son of Man must suffer many things. What are the things that He must suffer? You know the story. What did He suffer? Paul says that He emptied Himself of divine glory. We know the narrative tells us that Jesus was arrested, that He was put on a mock trial. He stood before thrones that He had given. That Jesus was humiliated. Have you ever been humiliated? Jesus is humiliated for you. Think of the beatings that Jesus underwent. Think of being spat upon by a Roman soldier. Think of the many abuses the Son of Man must suffer. One of the many things to being abused is the mockings. Think of the abandonment. Jesus was abandoned for you. Have you ever felt abandoned? Think of the embarrassment of Judas, one of your very own, turning you over. Think of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when He asked the Father to take the cup from Him because death was in the cup, sin was in the cup. Think of the terrible agony of crucifixion. How does Isaiah 53 set it up for us? The Suffering Servant? Think of Jesus suffering. The Son of Man must suffer many things. Why? Because we have many things, and Jesus will suffer for all of them as our substitute.

And not only that. Jesus says in verse 31 that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected. I would write that word down, *rejected*. You offer up who you are and it's not enough. Jesus was rejected by what is the Sanhedrin—the Elders—the chief priest, and the scribes. That would make up the government. The law of the land would reject Jesus, and you should not be surprised that if you hold on to an Orthodox biblical Christianity, you will be rejected. We live in a world that is quickly devolving and has turned completely away from everything that is true and right and beautiful. So don't be surprised when a Speaker of the House is elected, and he happens to be a Christian like us, and he's being skewered. Why? Because we believe what we

believe. Don't be surprised that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected.

What else? The Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected, and then be killed. The wages of sin is death. Why death? You read the Old Testament. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Oftentimes, the death of someone that is sinful is immediate. It's the reminder of what we actually deserve. Why must the Son of Man be killed? Because the wages of sin is death. Here is the One who has never sinned, who will stand in the place of sinners. He will stand in your place. It's a good way for you to remember the gospel. Jesus died in my place. Here's the gospel—this is why Jesus came.

But that's not the last *must*. The *must* is like this: the Son of Man *must* suffer many things. He *must* be rejected. He *must* be killed. At the end of verse 31, the Son of Man *must*, after three days, rise again. Here is the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Here is why we go to church on a Sunday, because Jesus died on the cross on a Friday. That Saturday—which is the Sabbath—He kept completely for the very last time, the day of rest. God raised Him from the dead on a Sunday. That's why we sing with celebration. Our worship singing is not somber. It's because of the resurrection that the Son of Man must be raised from the dead, which means that the sacrifice was accepted. That victory has been given. That forgiveness can be yours. This is why we have hope. This is why you can walk through terrible tragedy and people wonder, *How did you make it through?* It's because of this. Because the Son of Man suffered many things. He was killed and was raised from the dead. This is a promise of a coming Kingdom. This is why we don't panic when we look at the world. It looks like it's on fire. Why? Because we are citizens of another Kingdom. Now, this makes no sense to Peter. You have the advantage. You've read it; you know the story. Peter doesn't know the story, so he decides to correct Jesus. Can you imagine? Some of us try to do that with our own lives. So, I'm going to give you the fourth point, number four:

The Lord Disciplines Those He Loves

Sometimes I'll say that the Lord disciplines those He loves, and today I am His favorite, because I get disciplined so much. In verses 32 and 33, Jesus spoke plainly. He's not speaking in parable anymore. It's very clear. He just laid it out straight for Peter and the disciples. There is not a metaphor, not a simile. There's no parable. He just spoke plainly. Now, Peter assumes some authority, and in verse 32, he pulls Jesus aside because he doesn't want to embarrass the Rabbi. He says to come over here, and let me explain. I'm going to offer this to you privately just so you don't look silly. Because, evidently, you don't have a clue of what a Messiah is supposed to be. So Peter starts to rebuke Jesus. Verse 33 tells us that the other disciples are watching this. They evidently were close enough that they were not out of earshot, although Peter acted like he was pulling Jesus away. They could see it verse 33. Jesus sees that they are watching, and Jesus stopped him. After having such a great thing happen, Peter says, "You're the Christ, you're the Son of the living God." And Jesus tells him, "Peter, flesh and blood didn't give you this. This came from God. And now I've explained to you what's going to happen; how salvation will come about." And Peter says that there is no way.

And then there is verse 33. Jesus says to Peter, "You get behind me, Satan. What you're saying is satanic. What you're saying is exactly what Satan said to try to keep me from going to the cross. He told me I could get glory without having to go through all of that. You sound like the devil, Peter. You get your mind off of the things of the earth, how things are done here. Get your mind on the things of God." What are the things of God? We've got to go back down this mountain. We've got to go back down this mountain to the cross. That is the plan of God. The Son of Man must suffer many things. He must be rejected and killed. But Peter, the Father will raise Jesus again. Get your mind on things of God.

In fact, the very next verse in the Bible—in the very next verse—Jesus will start talking more and more about the cross. Jesus clearly loves Peter, and Jesus completely corrected him. Peter will become the greatest preacher of the cross that the New Testament would see. What are the things of God? The things of God are the gospel of Jesus Christ, who lived perfectly and died in

the place of sinners. God raised Him from the dead. This church is founded on the gospel of Jesus. What are the things of God that are growing you in Christ, knowing all that God is taking you through by His providential good hand? He's walking you through that, sustaining you, teaching you things, growing you in Christ. If you believe, you are in Jesus, and part of the things of God is you growing in Christ. Part of the things of God is our church reaching the community. By God's grace and His goodness, He's given us the resources and the place and the opportunity to reach people for Christ. Why? Because we have an eternal hope in the living Jesus Christ. Today I'd like for you to put your faith in this Jesus and answer His question, "Who do you say I am?"

Your answer determines everything.

(Pastor prays)