

## **Walking with Jesus – Week 2** **Who do you say that I am?**

**Mark 8:27-38**<sup>27</sup> 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?” <sup>28</sup> And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” <sup>29</sup> He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>30</sup> And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

### **Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection**

<sup>31</sup> Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

<sup>34</sup> He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel,<sup>[b]</sup> will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup> Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup> Those who are ashamed of me and of my words<sup>[c]</sup> in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Welcome to week 2 of our series on walking with Jesus.

I shared last week that many are participating in the Book Study. Even if you are not in the study, if you have picked up a copy of the book, I hope you are enjoying it. And *oh by the way*, there is still time to grab a book and read along with us, even if you can't join us on Tuesday mornings.

The author Jackie Phillips, is a dynamic lady and she will be here next Sunday Sept 19<sup>th</sup> to speak to us and to talk about her walk with Jesus and finding her faith. Throughout her book she uses the imagery of walking, she is an avid runner, hiker and just simply loves the outdoors.

In our scripture today we see Jesus again, inviting the Disciples and the people around him to walk with him. He has left the region of Tyre and returned to Galilee. The scripture we read today opens with the Disciples walking with Him to the next city in the story. He takes them out on the dusty road from Galilee and they set out for Caesarea Phillipi, a city that is up in the mountains and a great distance from the Sea of Galilee over 60 miles away. That walk would take them several days of walking even without stopping to visit or rest.

Jesus is speaking to them and you can imagine that they would talk the whole way as they were walking, walking along in the countryside, and learning so much from Jesus. Using that time as a classroom, but also listening and getting out into the open air "just taking a walk" as we discussed last week, using that time to refresh their health and their spiritual health.

The power of the wonderful sights and scenes as they walked throughout the countryside with Jesus must have been amazing, these simple walks were life changing for the Disciples. They were faithful and followed Jesus and in that following they were immersed into life changing and spiritual revelations that only come from a deep immersion into the word of God, spending time, really walking with Jesus every day.

I've often wished I had time to take a long pilgrimage maybe a retreat of two - three weeks to spend time in prayer, reading and worship. But alas, the business of life is always calling us away, our 21<sup>st</sup> century lives keep us distracted from really walking with Jesus intentionally.

The Author of the book we are reading shared in last week's reading assignment that she has a Master's Degree in Recreation. She wrote that during her time in school during the 70's it was a common belief that by the years ahead in America we would be doing less work, maybe only up to 30 hours a week. The theory then was that technology would allow us more time for leisure activities.

Boy were they wrong. What we have learned is that today we spend all of our time tethered to a phone, a computer, maybe TV or other forms of technology and that has become our recreation. But is it, may be it is the technology that keep us from things in our lives that are really important, like work on our souls, our spiritual selves, that deeper spiritual work that comes from searching scripture, prayer and meditation.

Now looking back, experience has taught us that the things we thought would free us, the technology that we thought as a culture would make our lives easier, has really just complicated our lives.

We have learned with COVID that technology used correctly can be a very helpful tool. But like all tools that come from our human ingenuity, technology needs to be used to better our lives not distract us from the things that really matter.

In a recent research paper sponsored by Pew Research asked some world leaders in education what concerned them about the use of technology in our young people in High School and college;

**Dr. Meg Mott, a professor of politics at Marlboro College,** said in her response;

*"The internet is harming well-being. There is a disturbing trend amongst college students, who operate as if all questions should be answered online. The devices make it so easy to find answers elsewhere that students forget to ask deep questions of themselves. This lack of uninterrupted introspection creates a very human problem: the anxiety of not knowing oneself. The more the culture equates knowledge with data and social life with social media, the less time is spent on the path of wisdom, a path that always requires a good quotient of self-awareness.*

If you read the words of experts in education, political life, sociology etc. We see some disturbing concerns arise. That the gift of technology that has come of age in the last 40 years may also be a harmful thing for the education of our children, and for our culture as we move into the future.

The same opportunity to find answers quickly also causes us to fall victim to information that isn't true, and as we have seen played out in our world recently, unscrupulous people have intentionally used the internet for their personal agendas rather than helping the world find the truth.

So from time in memorium whenever there are new innovations, the world embraces them, sometimes new things are called evil only because they are misunderstood. In the middle ages anyone that dared to say that the world was round and not flat was considered a quack a heretic, science was to be mistrusted. Sadly we have seen that same human instinct to mistrust science raise its head as our doctors are struggling to fight COVID today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The great mistake human kind has made throughout the ages is that at times we begin to worship the “new thing” whatever is the latest and greatest, and we believe that if we have created something then we don't need God.

Instead of thanking God for our progress and the inspiration that comes from God. We say that if Science is the answer and it can save us, then of course there is no God. We know that God uses all things in our world to provide help to us.

We must remember that everything we have, all of our natural resources, all of the foundations of our science are part of the creation. Anything we do to create something new, all of the basic elements are here, they were provided at Creation, we, are smart and have ingenuity and we have learned new ways to be creative and innovative with God's creation. I think God would have us use all of this technology to help and preserve our lives, to make us better people.

But we should never worship the creation, but always Worship the Creator.

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Scripture informs us that it's God's hope for us to walk along with Jesus. As Christians we accept that walking that path with him does give us time for discernment, for deeper reflection to gain insight and wisdom.

We know that the journey with Jesus was much like the classroom for the Disciples and on this particular day, while many people would ask Jesus questions, Jesus has an intentional question for them, look at vs 27:  
*and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” <sup>28</sup> And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” <sup>29</sup> He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>30</sup> And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.*

At this point in the ministry of Jesus the Disciples have seen so many miracles, they have seen healing, and the feeding of the 5000 has occurred earlier in chapter 8. They have seen Jesus take 7 loaves of bread and feed over 5000 people.

If that did not convince them that Jesus was the Messiah, I can't imagine what would? My guess is that when Jesus asks Peter this question Peter is hoping that he is right, and that Jesus would finally affirm his mission as Messiah fully to them.

Peter speaks up, and Jesus asks the question again, but notice he changes the question he does not ask, who do people say that I am? He looks at Peter and says, "*who do you say that I am?*"

Without hesitation Peter says, "*You are the Messiah!*" Jesus realizes in this moment that the true power of who he is cannot be hidden much longer. As a teacher He must have been happy that his students have been paying attention on those long walks.

The text tells us that he "*sternly tells them not to tell anyone about him*". He goes on to describe the way that he will be tortured and that he will be sacrificed for them, and after he dies, on the third day he will rise.

Peter who is a brave and very honest man, he is already a leader among the Disciples, and it's clear that Jesus has appointed him to be the leader of his people after he is gone. Peter takes Jesus aside and the text only tells us that Peter "rebukes" Jesus. I think we can imagine that it was something like this: (Jesus don't talk like that, we cannot lose you, you are our leader, we need you to be the leader of this movement, we need you to free us from the Roman overlords, our people have been waiting for a Messiah for centuries. Jesus please don't frighten us with that death talk!)

Jesus knows how all of this will end, Jesus knows that his precious time of teaching and preaching will soon be over. We already know that the leaders of the Temple are plotting to come and arrest him. All of these men traveling and following Jesus must have understood the danger that might befall them. Peter might not have wanted to speak out loud as he knew that the men might become fearful and that might cause them to fall away.

We can't know the answer to what Peter said, but we can read what Jesus tells them next, and it's very important. He says something very difficult to hear to his friend Peter:

He says: *Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.*"

<sup>34</sup> He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Wow, Peter is telling Jesus the right answer, and telling Jesus that he wants to follow him. Imagine the feelings of sadness that Peter must have felt. To have his teacher, his friend rebuke him that way. But Jesus is telling all the people, you can't cling to things of earth, they will always disappoint. All of the things we think are important humanly are NOT what will sustain your spirit.

Jesus tells them, lay down your needs, your desires, and your wants, your goals, your *have to dos*. In our modern world we might add our toys, our technology, our will, our greed the list goes on. Jesus is saying just follow me!

He says: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

So Jesus is really asking Peter, and everyone there, tell me, what is really important to you, what is really keeping you from following me? What is really keeping you from deciding to dedicate yourself to be my follower? What human, thing, relationship, technology, hobby; what distraction, what thing are you not willing to lay down, so that you can really become my follower?

We all have something to lay down, but when we finally do, Jesus is there, he promised us that he would walk with us, carry us, and support us. He will always listen to the cries of our hearts.

So today let us consider our lives, may we turn off the TV, close our laptops, put our phones on silent and seek in our deeper selves the wisdom to follow Jesus, to deepen our relationship with him, and to do as he commanded us to do. To follow the path of wisdom that leads to our relationship with Jesus, make a commitment to our spiritual lives growing.

He calls us to Love God and Love one another, those are the things that really matter as we learn to more closely *walk with Jesus*.

May God give us the grace and insight to follow Him today and each day. Amen