

March 01, 2015
Sermon for the Second Sunday in Lent
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 8:27–38

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 8:27–38 (ESV)

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.” ³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

If you are the parent of a pre-teen or a teenager, you may have heard this phrase...some of you may have even said something like this before...

“Please don’t do or say anything that will embarrass me in front of my friends!”

Sometimes we parents do things that, rightly or wrongly, cause our children to think they should be embarrassed.

At other times, you can’t help wondering who has reason to be ashamed of whom.

That’s the kind of situation today’s Gospel puts before us.

Who is ashamed of whom?

Peter was ashamed of Jesus.

Just a few minutes before, Peter had confessed that Jesus was indeed the Christ (v 29). But Peter tried to define Jesus according to his own goals: the glorious king, triumphant over Israel’s enemies.

He might have meant well, wanting to spare his Master the shame of defeat, and spare himself embarrassment. After all, who wants to see their guy, the one they are backing, go down in defeat. Which is what Peter saw happening, especially with the defeatist attitude which Jesus seemed to be talking about.

But Jesus immediately saw what was taking place. Peter’s “good intention” was a temptation from satan himself! If Jesus didn’t follow through with what needed to be done, there would be no suffering, no death, and no payment for mankind’s sin!

The most terrible attack against Jesus comes from those who love Him.

The warning, the harsh rebuke of Jesus' "get behind me satan" is for anyone who would weaken the offence and scandal of His Gospel.

Jesus had already charged His disciples not to proclaim Him publicly as the Messiah (v 30), which people would have misunderstood in the same way Peter did: So the Lord defines Himself as "the Son of Man" (v 31).

While some Jewish groups of Jesus' time believed that God's Servant, the Son of Man, would suffer, the majority did not. Peter and the disciples sided with the common, popular view of a warrior messiah, one that would defeat the Roman overlords and would bring Israel back to the greatness of King David's reign.

In the strongest possible way, Jesus stressed that popular opinion was not God's view. The Messiah must suffer, die, and rise from the dead, which had been foretold numerous places in the Old Testament. (Gen 3:15; Pss 22:1–21; 118:13, 18, 22; Is 50:6–10; 53; Zech 12:10; 13:7).

God will do battle with the devil, and Jesus will be the casualty whose death brings about the ultimate victory for God's people.

For the sake of mankind's redemption, Jesus had to suffer and die.

It is shocking and scandalous that the Messiah is to die at the hands of Israel's religious leaders.

(J. R. Wilch, "Why It Was Necessary for the Pharisees to Oppose Jesus," *Lutheran Theological Review*, spring 1983, 20–36).

More shocking yet, Jesus' own disciples were ashamed of present rejection and impatient for eternal glory. Playing right into satan's trap.

In turn, Jesus called Peter “Satan.” Who was ashamed of whom?

And what about us?

Are we ashamed of Jesus because we might lose things of this world?

Luther stated, “Whatever you love most is your god.”

Is that money; what money buys; your job; family; lifestyle?

The meaning of Jesus’ life and death was service for mankind (Mk 10:45).

Being a disciple of Christ means devoting your life in Christ-like service.

Would you give up the selfish aspects of your lifestyle for the sake of Christ?

Would your congregation?

Our world offers many tempting pleasures for our flesh and emotions, but Jesus can top the best. He has gained for us life everlasting.

But following Jesus also requires sacrifice.

It’s a question of profit or loss: you could carve out your own little kingdom in this world, but aiming for such a goal means the eventual loss of your very self.

Will you sacrifice everlasting treasures for cheap worldly trinkets?

Will you sacrifice everlasting life for the pleasures of the moment?

The question is not, What can I get out of the world for myself? The real question is, What can I give this world of suffering people?

We are called to go out into the world with the life-giving Gospel.

If we do not spend our life for Christ, we lose it. When Jesus returns in His glory, He will say to those who have been ashamed of Him,

“I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Mt 7:23).

Are we ashamed of Jesus because we might lose “things of men”?

Like the teenager that is embarrassed of his parents, of how they look or talk or even their morals, we all want acceptance and recognition.

Are we afraid of ridicule because we believe life comes from a Man who was executed on a cross (v 34)?

Is that too much foolishness for our friends? Are we afraid of being labeled a “religious nut” because we take time for worship on Sundays rather than telling our friends that we can’t participate in three day softball tournaments or hit the casinos on Sunday mornings?

Jesus offers us “the things of God” (v 33) That doesn’t mean that it will always be a bed of roses.

Jesus is starkly honest with no false pretenses, offering no easy shortcut. Though we may suffer, we shall overcome. He gives us the victory (Jn 16:33; Rom 8:37).

Are we ashamed of Jesus because we might lose our self?

Self-centeredness is idolatry, self-worship.

Self-fulfillment deceives us, promising that by doing what comes naturally we will be happy.

In contrast, Jesus calls us to spend ourselves for His Gospel, and that could mean our losing our life.

Jesus calls us to say no to our natural selves (v 34), promising that those who lose their lives for His sake find them (v 35).

Denying yourself does not mean self-humiliation or rejecting yourself as a person of value to God.

It means that despite the hand that the world has dealt you, you still take up your cross and follow Him.

You surrender yourself either to God or to Satan.

If you live for yourself, you are really living for the devil.

But if you live for God, you spend life in service. “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* [London: SCM, 1959] 79).

In so dying we live.

Illustration: In the fourth century A. D., Telemachus sought to serve God as a solitary hermit. One day he realized this was selfish, and to serve God properly, he must serve mankind. So he made his way to Rome. He was appalled at the gladiator fights that pleased blood-thirsty crowds. He threw himself between the gladiators to stop the fight, and was killed, but the tragedy of a murdered man of God was the beginning of the end to the sport of fighting to the death (Barclay, p. 204).

Now that doesn't mean that we must lose our lives in service to Christ. In fact, very few are called to do so.

If we sacrifice any part of our lives or our selves to Jesus, He shall preserve us truly, completely, everlastingly.

There is almost sort of a significant paradox here: The way to self-fulfillment is the way of self-denial. I who I am by discovering who Jesus is.

Everything that Jesus calls us to endure, He has already endured. He's been there before, He's done it all and suffered it all already.

Our sufferings are never more than Jesus has not already faced.

We can willingly follow such a leader

Illustration: When Alexander the Great was leading his army through a desert in Persia in the fourth century B. C., at one point his troops suffered greatly from lack of water. Some managed to find a little water and proudly presented it to Alexander in a helmet. But seeing how his warriors gazed longingly at the refreshing drink, he refused it with the remark, "If I alone drink this, my men would lose heart!" With that, they let out a shout and gladly continued to follow their thirsty king (Barclay, p. 202).

Jesus calls us to renounce no more in this world than He already has.

Can any of us imagine what Jesus gave up to become our Savior?

He left the perfection of heaven; ruling at the right hand of God, to be born of a woman, born under the law, to fulfill it as we never could.

And now, we Christian's are called to lead our lives with our main purpose being to follow Christ, wherever He leads.

We have only one life to spend in His service. Let us gladly follow Him faithfully through self-denial, suffering, and death, ultimate glory, eternally in heaven!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory

Bibliography

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Sermon Outline

Who is ashamed of whom?

Mark 8:27-38

Are we ashamed of Jesus...?

1. Because we might lose things of this world?
2. Because we might lose “things of men”?
3. Because we might lose our self?