

You Are the Christ

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Mark 8

In chapter 7 Jesus and the disciples are back to Decapolis after visiting Tyre and Sidon (Phoenician Cities, currently Lebanon) where Jesus granted the wish of the woman who was satisfied with the crumbs. Then we see the miracle of healing a deaf person which symbolized how Israel is deaf and does not hear or see Jesus the Messiah.

In chapter 8, we are in Gentile territory and Jesus is teaching and feeding this time 4000 people. Jesus wanted to feed them. Like in the story of feeding the 5000 when the disciples did not know how to feed, here we find a similar situation. If the 5000 were Jewish people, now the same story repeats in the gentile world. Jesus uses similar elements of bread and fish, (different numbers), to make a point that Jesus is the source of feeding both the Israelite and the gentile world. *(Syrophenician woman and Jesus).*

Next, we find the Pharisees are asking for sign. Sign? How many signs one needs to get it?

Then Jesus and the disciples are back to the sea on a boat, one more time. Again, food becomes an issue. There was an issue of not having enough bread to eat; and here is what Jesus says:

“Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?”

(Mark 8:17-18 ESV)

How strange....

Imagine the Israelite passed the Red Sea, and they come and ask Moses for a sign that God is with them. Seriously...

This is the reality we live in. We want signs. Do you really going to increase your faith if you see a sign?

Jesus continues his mission.

Jesus continues having compassion towards the people and feeding them, healing them, teaching them...

-We move on to the next teaching of Jesus:

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. (Mark 8:27-30 ESV)

As you see on the map, they move to the North to the boarder of the Holy Land and the Gentile territory. This time they are traveling walking, not on a boat on the sea. They arrive in a beautiful area, south of Mt Hermon, west of Jordan. It is a fertile country; **Herod the Great** built a grand marble temple to glorify the Roman emperor, and his son **Herod Philip** enlarged the city to honor Caesar.¹ Thus the place its called **Caesarea Philippi**.

What a place to reveal the identity of our Lord Jesus Christ full of idols and corrupt political power. (*tourists visit this area often*)

Jesus asks a basic question: **“Who do people say that I am?”**

If we stop on the street and ask people who Jesus is?

We will get thousands of opinion

Jesus is not having an identity crisis. He is teaching his disciples a very important lesson. Because how many times even disciples did not understand who Jesus is? They answered: **“John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.”**

Let me go to chapter 6

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known.

Some said, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead.¹⁵ But others said, “He is Elijah.” And others said, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.”¹⁶ But when Herod heard of it, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.” (Mark 6:14-16 ESV)

So, here we go, they answered what the outside world is saying.

But Jesus wants to know their opinion,

“But who do you say that I am?”

Until now the disciples called him **rabbi, teacher** (4:38), also we read that they asked within themselves **“Who is this?”** (4:41)

Yet,

Peter always has an answer: **“You are the Christ.”**

In Matthew, Jesus says to Peter that statement came from God: **For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.** (Mat 13:17b)

This is a very important declaration in all gospels, especially here in this gospel according to Mark. Peter's answer **is the center of this gospel**, my dear brothers and sister.

"Peter's confession occurs in the very center of the Gospel. This passage serves as a hinge between the first half of the Gospel, where Jesus' power is so prominent, and the second half, where his weakness becomes predominant."²

Jesus then declares not to tell anyone, yet....yet....like he said to the blind man and others. He is delaying the public declaration for now, so that he teaches and prepares the road for his disciples.

-What is next?

Let me tell you who is this Messiah:

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." (Mark 8:31-33 ESV)

Jesus explains the task of the Messiah:

1. He should suffer many things
2. He should be rejected by Jewish authorities
3. He should be killed
4. He should be raised from the dead after three days

Wow... no parables, no stories, direct speech about who the Messiah is Jesus' task on this earth.

In Mark, Jesus in a bold way explains that the Messiah will suffer. (Mark 8:31-38, 9:30-37, 10:32-45)

The same Peter who declared who Jesus is came and rebuked Jesus: "What are you talking about, man?" "Are you crazy or what? I just declared that you are Christ, the Messiah." (my interpretation).

-Why can't Peter accept that the Messiah should suffer and die?

In the OT we see the promised Messiah is described in many places, including the prophets. "He will be a king. He will be a shepherd. He will be a Redeemer.

However, there was one element that the rabbis seemed to overlook: the Messiah would suffer."³

Indeed, who wants to follow a Messiah who will suffer, be rejected, and die? The Rabbis somehow overlooked passages like Isaiah 52-53; Psalm 22.

-Israel was waiting for a Messiah who would liberate them from pagan dominion, such as the Romans in Jesus' time.

Peter and the disciples could not get it.

Yet, Jesus is fulfilling God's plan from the beginning. His suffering is not in vain, it is to redeem the universe from sin. The punishment for sin before almighty God was death. And if Jesus is the Messiah who came to save, this means he should die to make full payment for our sin, not his, but ours.

-Peter and the others don't get it.

How is this rabbi, who can calm the sea, who can walk on the sea, who can heal the sick, who can give forgive sins, who can raise people from death going to suffer and die?

Matera said: "Jesus is the expected Messiah in the most unexpected manner."⁴

So what was Jesus' reaction:

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.

"Turning around," it seems Peter ran towards Jesus; The other disciples are behind Jesus following the leader, Peter came forward to rebuke. Jesus now and rebukes Peter and puts him in his place, "**get behind me Satan**"

Why Jesus equated Peter with the Satan?

Matthew 4, Satan tempted Jesus to worship him...

Satan does not want Jesus to be crucified, so that Jesus will not raised from the death, so that sin will not be defeated, so that humanity will not be redeemed

"Peter, Set your mind in the right place, how God works is not how humans work.... Watch out, Peter..."

That is a good warning to me and to you. Don't bring your agenda to Jesus and ask his endorsement for it.

-Next

Jesus is not only teaching who he is as the Messiah and what his mission is, he is also teaching who the disciples will be, and how one can be a disciple: the cost of discipleship.

Here it is how to follow Jesus:

1. Deny yourself. Which means surrender to the will of God.

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. (Mark 8:34 ESV)

"Jesus does not ask disciples to deny something to themselves but to deny the self and all self-promoting ambitions."⁵

Discipleship is not a part-time volunteer job that whenever you have time you will follow Jesus. It is total surrender. Let your will be done, not my will.

Illustration: Speaking about denial self, my former student who I told you about her last week, she has talk show on TV; she was big time self-promoter, she had a lot of followers. Not that she became Christian, the producer of the show is not allowing her to say about her faith in Jesus. She refused to do this and she lost big business income.

2. Take up the cross. (Mark 8:34 esv)

Jesus said this before his crucifixion. Yet, the context was understood. In the Roman empire each person who would be crucified, would carry the cross which he would be crucified (actually, the horizontal beam of the cross). As they made their way to the place of execution, they were tortured, wiped, spited, rejected. Jesus is asking, "Are you willing to endure such a shame for my name's sake?" Which means the cost of being disciple is to be ready even to giving your life for Jesus.

3. Follow me: Jesus (Mark 8:34 ESV)

What does to follow means in today's vocabulary?

-In social media, the number of people following you: watch your pictures, get instant updates about what you eat, what you wear, where you go, and how you feel? And you are proud when more and more people follow you...

What does it mean follow Jesus?

Does it mean to walk behind him and marvel saying "wow" about his life and teaching?

Or it is to follow his example.

What is the will of Jesus, and how we can follow His way, his will.

- I invited a missionary who was serving in a dangerous place to give his testimony. Someone from the attendee told me, "Badveli, let us bring this missionary to the US so he will be rescued from those people."

“You Might Gain the world yet lose your soul”

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? (Mark 8:35-37 ESV)

To save a soul, one will do everything because that is a priority. Life is precious. We do everything to “fill up our barns” and enlarge our bank accounts, but forget the most important to take care of our soul.

For me it means to surrender to Jesus, and it means to give up from worldly priorities. In losing one’s life for Jesus’ sake is gain... a principle tough to follow...

4. Be bold for Jesus and not ashamed.

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.” (Mark 8:38 ESV)

Do your “neighbor” know you are Christian?

We will be accountable one day to our God if we denied Him. How often we deny Jesus by being silent when they are mocking our Lord? Or we twist the truth when we know the truth? Or why shall I open my mouth? They will laugh at me...

Last Sunday, I told you about my former student, who was an atheist anti-Jesus who became a Christian seven months ago. After she became a Christian, some Christian friends of hers start inviting her to their church. She is puzzled. She said to me, “Why are they inviting me now? How come they were my friends and were so silent about their faith?”

To end:

the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels

We are talking about second coming of Jesus when he will come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

It is not more Bethlehem birth

It is triumphal coming in glory

Glimpse of that glory will see next week when Jesus takes the three disciples who go to the mountain. There they will experience the glory of God. It is foretaste what is coming next in our lives.

Declaring who Jesus is good. But to follow our Lord Jesus Christ is costly.

my prayer is, that we experience the ultimate miracle which is God opens eyes of my heart so that self-centered heart can come to not just to the king, but to the kings way.

We can do it because he is our Lord and Savior.

I can do it alone. I surrender to him, I put my will under his will.

To God be the Glory

Amen

Whenever I read these verses about the suffering of the cross and the glory to follow I hear the words of a poet haunting me. In 1988 I met Traian Dorz, a Romanian poet who spent sixteen years in prison enduring the shame of the cross. During that time he composed ten thousand poems to the praise of Christ. When I met him, he drew my face close to his and said, "You *teach* about the cross. We *live* under the cross." I was stunned by his words. Then he prayed for me, that I would know something of the sweetness of Christ that he knew in prison. I have since met several men who were in prison with Traian Dorz. Without hesitation they told me that those days were the happiest of their lives. It was there, in prison, that they tasted the glory, through the suffering. **Brian Morgan**

1. David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 323
2. David E Garland, P 323
3. R.C. Sproul, *He Thought Them as One Who Had Authority* Mark, P 180
4. Matera, *The Kingship of Jesus*, P 145, from the *NIV Application Commentary* P 324
5. NIV 327