

#1793

Cf. #411 #557 #1034 #1174 #1763

Mark 8:27-38¹

Peter confesses Christ,
& Christ teaches about the cross.
17th Sunday after Pentecost
Supplementary Lectionary
Series "B," Gospels

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Grace WELS Durand MI
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²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptizer; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the Prophets."

²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the Elders, Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law [Scribes],² and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, and he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to himself along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life [Greek, *yuchv*, soul] will lose it, but whoever loses his life [Greek, *yuchv*, soul] for me and for the Gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul [Greek, *yuchv*, soul]? ³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul [Greek, *yuchv*, soul]? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my Words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

WHO IS JESUS?

I. THE CHRIST

II. THE ONE WHOM BELIEVERS FOLLOW

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

² These groups composed the Jewish Sanhedrin or Supreme Court of the Jews.

In the Name of Jesus, who suffered and died on the cross and arose from the dead for our salvation, Dear Fellow-Redeemed.

Jesus and his disciples were quite a ways north of the Sea of Galilee in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Jesus was taking this opportunity to teach his disciples privately. Yet, as you heard in the sermon text read earlier, there was also quite a crowd following Jesus.

The crowds of people had various theories about who Jesus was. Jesus asked his disciples about this. "He asked them, 'Who do people say I am?'" (8:27b). Some said Jesus was a reincarnation of John the Baptizer whom King Herod had executed. Some said that Jesus was Elijah whom God had promised to send into the world. They took that notion from what God said through the Old Testament Prophet Malachi,

⁵ "See, I will send you the Prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse" (Malachi 4:5,6).

Others were saying that Jesus was one of the other Old Testament Prophets whom God had brought back from the grave. Then Jesus asked the question, which is the most important question in the history of the world: "Who do you say I am?" (8:29b).

"Who do you say I am?" That is the question that confronts every man, woman and child ever born. On the answer to that question hangs where a person will spend eternity: In heaven or in hell. So, the question is asked of each and every one of us: WHO IS JESUS? WHO IS JESUS? He is I. THE CHRIST; and, he is II. THE ONE WHOM BELIEVERS FOLLOW.

WHO IS JESUS? I. THE CHRIST

Peter answers Jesus' question, not only for himself but also for the rest of Jesus' disciples. "Jesus asked 'Who do you say I am?' Peter answered, 'You are the Christ'" (8:29b,c). What Peter was saying by that confession was that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. Jesus was that special One appointed and consecrated by God. Jesus was the One who was filled with the Holy Spirit without limit (cf. John 3:34) – in other words, Jesus, the Son of Man (cf. 8:31&38), was true God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus' many miracles, which the disciples witnessed, were evidence of his divine nature. Jesus was the Son of Man and the Son of God. As the Christ, Messiah, Anointed One, Jesus filled three offices: Prophet, Priest and King.

Jesus was The Prophet. Moses had prophesied, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him" (Deuteronomy 18:15). Jesus is that Prophet.

As The Prophet, Jesus proclaimed God's Word in truth and purity. Jesus pointed to sin and its devastating results. Jesus prophesied about himself that he was the One who would deliver people from sin. Jesus told Nicodemus, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14&15). This Gospel or Good News has continued to be proclaimed today, as Jesus sends out believers to make that same proclamation to others.

Jesus is The Great High Priest. In the Old Testament, Priests offered up sacrifices for the people. Yet listen to what the writer to the Hebrews says about all those Old Testament sacrifices: "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4b). Not all of the blood of beasts slaughtered on Jewish altars could take away one sin. So what was the point of those Old Testament sacrifices?

The point of those Old Testament sacrifices was to foreshadow what Jesus accomplished. The writer to the Hebrews states, "This Priest [Jesus] ... offered for all time One Sacrifice for sins [namely himself], he sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). Jesus is the sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world (cf. 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Through Jesus, the entire world has been reconciled to God; through Jesus, the sins of the entire world are not counted or imputed against anyone (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus took away the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29b,36b). That means that Jesus, the Great High Priest, is the Redeemer of the world.

Jesus told Nicodemus, "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17). Jesus accomplished his saving work by paying to God the ransom price for the sins of the world: His holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. Concerning Jesus, Peter wrote in his first Epistle, "It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed ... but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect" (cf. 1 Peter 1:18&19). In addition, Jesus interceded for his people and continues to intercede for those who believe in him today.

St. Paul writes concerning Jesus that "Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:34b). Jesus intercedes for believers, and God the Father hears the intercession of his beloved Son with whom he is well-pleased. Believers in Jesus also intercede for others as James tells us, "Pray for each other The prayer of the righteous [that is, believers in Jesus] is powerful and effective" (cf. James 5:16b).

Jesus is also The King. In the Old Testament, kings ruled and governed their people; they also fought for their people and shared their victories with their people. Jesus, The King, fought for his people by going the way of the cross. Jesus is victorious over sin, death and the grave; over hell and over the power of the devil.

Jesus is victorious over sin, because "he committed no sin" (1 Peter 2:22; cf. Isaiah 53:9). Jesus challenged the Jews who opposed him, "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?"

(John 8:46a). They could not, because Jesus is perfect, holy and righteous, and his righteousness has been credited to all people (cf. Romans 3:22b-24).

Jesus is victorious over death and the grave. Jesus' resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday morning proves and proclaims his victory over death and grave.

Jesus is victorious over hell. The Apostle Peter tells us that Jesus "went and preached to the spirits in prison" – that is, the souls and evil spirits in hell (cf. 1 Peter 3:19; cf. Colossians 2:15). Jesus proclaimed his victory over the forces of hell. Jesus is also victorious over the devil.

The writer to the Hebrews states that Jesus destroyed "him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14b). The devil has no power over Jesus; Jesus has power over the devil. Jesus is The King.

Jesus is The King, and he shares his victory over sin, death and the grave and over hell and the power of the devil – Jesus shares his victory with believers. Jesus explained to his disciples how he would obtain this victory: "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the Elders, Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law [Scribes], and that he must be killed and after three days rise again" (8:31). Moreover, Jesus spoke of the Last Day when he said that "the Son of Man [will come] in his Father's glory with the holy angels" (8:38b). It is that glory and victory that Jesus shares with those who believe in him as their Savior (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:14b).

APPROPRIATION

So now, dear friends, the question is asked of you: Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus for you? ... and you? ... and you? ... and me? There are many partial and incorrect answers.

Jesus was a nice, even holy man, who did good things for people. Jesus was a good man. Jesus was a good man, who was condemned by some ruthless Jews and put to death by a corrupt Roman government. But there is really only one correct answer to the question of who Jesus is – only one answer for you and for me: Jesus is the Christ, my Lord and my Savior, my Redeemer and my God.

Jesus is my Lord. Jesus is my master and owner, because he bought me back from sin, death and the grave, from hell and from the devil and his power. Jesus bought me back by paying the ransom price of his own body and blood on the cross.

Jesus is my Savior. He has given me eternal salvation with him in heaven. Jesus has saved me from death and hell.

Jesus is my Redeemer. Jesus paid out to God the ransom price of his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death for me.

Jesus is my God. Jesus, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is true God and true LORD. Jesus is my LORD and my God.

Here are the answers to the question: Who is Jesus. These answers assure you and me of forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. On Judgment Day, we need have no fear, for faith in Jesus has been created in our hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit in God's Word.

It remains that if Jesus is our LORD and Savior, then we ought to follow him in our daily lives.

WHO IS JESUS? II. THE ONE WHOM BELIEVERS FOLLOW

The disciples were following Jesus now as he was speaking to them and teaching them in the region of Caesarea Philippi. What would happen in the future?

Our text tells us,

³¹ [Jesus] then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the Elders, Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law [Scribes], and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him (8:31,32).

Jesus was speaking about the way of the cross that he must go in order to accomplish the redemption of mankind. At this time, Peter and the other disciples, rejected this idea and rebuked Jesus for talking about the cross. Peter wanted Jesus to be a triumphant earthly king. Such a kingship, however, would do nothing to give a person eternal life in heaven. Thus, Jesus has to rebuke Peter, and, in so doing, points out to Peter and the others, the necessity and requirement of following him.

³³ But Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, and he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to himself along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life [Greek, $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$, soul] will lose it, but whoever loses his life [Greek, $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$, soul] for me and for the Gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul [Greek, $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$, soul]? ³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul [Greek, $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$, soul]? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my Words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels" (8:33-37).

Peter did not have in mind how God would redeem the world from sin, death and hell. Peter only was thinking about earthly, physical kingship and glory. But Jesus outlines what those would do who follow him – who believe in him.

Jesus says that those who follow him must deny themselves. They would deny, first of all, that there was any goodness or merit in them to deserve God's grace and forgiveness. Then, secondly, they would also deny their earthly and sinful lusts. St. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). St. Paul would exhort the believers in Colossae, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

Jesus says that those who follow him must take up their crosses. The crosses of believers in Jesus would not be just the crosses common to all people. All people have trials, tribulations, turmoils and troubles in this life. All people have ailments, illnesses, sicknesses and diseases. All people have aches and pains. But there would be crosses that believers in Jesus would carry because they were believers in Jesus.

Believers in Jesus, for the sake of Jesus and for the sake of the Gospel, would carry crosses. Jesus alludes to this when he says, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my Words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels" (8:38). A person would be ashamed of Jesus when he did not take the opportunities to confess Jesus to others. A person would be ashamed of Jesus when he did not tell others the Gospel of Jesus. A person would be ashamed of Jesus when he let the things of this world occupy first place in his life – things like possessions, pleasures, pastimes, earthly desires and wealth. The believer who did confess Jesus as his LORD and Savior would face persecution and even death. This would be true of Jesus' disciples, for all of them except for John would die a martyr's death; and John would spend most of his life enduring exile on the Island of Patmos.

Believers in Jesus would follow Jesus – follow Jesus through his Word. Through God's Word in truth and purity – Jesus' Word – believers would patiently endure the assaults of the devil, the world and their own sinful nature. They would follow Jesus out of this vale of tears and temptation into the eternal glory and victory of heaven with Jesus.

APPROPRIATION

Jesus is the One we are to follow in our journey through life. That means that we too are to deny ourselves.

Deny yourself. Know that within you – within your sinful nature – no good thing dwells. We make this confession along with St. Paul:

¹⁸ I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do

is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing (Romans 7:18,19).

The good that we want to do, we do not do; and, the evil we do not want to do, that is what we do. And, even when we do something that is right and good, our Old Adam, our sinful nature, hears the whisper of the devil, “Oh, you are such a good boy!” “Oh, you are such a good girl!” And the good we have done becomes a temptation for us about which to boast and in which to take pride. To deny oneself means to recognize that there is within us no righteousness of our own upon which we can depend before a just and holy God.

If we are going to follow Jesus, it means that we will have to take up our crosses and follow him. Those crosses will include the ridicule and humiliation we face from friends, family and co-workers, when we confess Jesus as our LORD and Savior. Those crosses will include being passed over for promotions and advancement in our work or profession, because we are known to be Christians. Those crosses we bear will be the irritation we cause to others when we do speak to them about Jesus.

Then too, we are to follow Jesus in his Word. Follow Jesus in his Word in truth and purity, staying away from everything that is not in accord with his Word. We are to follow Jesus in worship and Sacraments. We are to follow Jesus in our homes as we make time for devotions and private study for Jesus and his Word.

As we review all these things about following Jesus, however, we see how often we have miserably failed. How, then, can we follow Jesus?

How can we follow Jesus? On our own, we cannot! We confess in the Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed: “I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing, believe in Jesus Christ my LORD or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel.”³ The Holy Spirit creates in us a new and willing heart and spirit through the Gospel. Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit convinces us that all of our sins are forgiven and that by faith alone in Jesus we will share in Jesus’ glory and Kingdom in eternity. By faith alone in Jesus, the Holy Spirit strengthens us and encourages us to deny ourselves, to endure crosses and shame for the sake of Jesus, and to follow Jesus out of this world into his Kingdom of Heaven.

CONCLUSION

As Jesus took his disciples aside privately to teach them, so Jesus does with you and me. Jesus speaks to us now in worship in his Word. Jesus speaks to us whenever we open

³ Kuske, David P., *Luther’s Catechism – The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and an Exposition for Children and Adults Written in Contemporary English*, 3rd ed. (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998), pp. 5, 181.

our Bibles and have him speak to us privately. Jesus speaks to us fervently and convincingly.

Through Jesus' Word, the Holy Spirit has created faith in Jesus in our hearts. Through that same Word of Jesus, the Holy Spirit strengthens us to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses daily, and follow Jesus our LORD and Savior and Redeemer. By faith alone in Jesus, we follow him through this world of tears and sorrow into his heavenly glory. Amen.