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Grace Evangelical Church
Communion Sunday, March 14, 2010
"Right Yet Wrong About Jesus"
Mark 8:27-9:1

The popular idea about Jesus today is that He was a good man, a great teacher even a prophet, on par with other great men who have lived in history. That Jesus was any more than that will not be accepted. Certainly this is a comfortable and politically correct way to think in our culture today. To say that Jesus is God is not accepted in the public arena. He was just a good man. Of course, some even go much further in their thinking as they distort completely who Jesus is.

In fact, recently I had a couple of people come to our front door at our home, and they believed that Jesus was a great person, yes, even having divine empowerment, but they would not accept that Jesus was God. I quoted some Scripture to them but they would not accept the Word of God's record concerning what Jesus claimed about Himself, that He is the I AM, the self-existent God (John 8:58; Exodus 3:14), yes the Jehovah God of the Old Testament (Isaiah 40:3 & John 1:23). He and His Father are of the same substance, deity (John 10:30).

These people would acknowledge something right about Jesus, but in actuality they were totally wrong about who Jesus was and what He did for them.

When we come to our text today in Mark 8:27ff, we find a little different situation, but the idea is the same. Peter had begun to understand who Jesus was when Jesus asked him, completely different from those who came to our front door recently. But Peter was still wrong about what Jesus' mission really was.

It's possible, then, to be right about who Jesus is but wrong about what He really is about in His mission on earth.

As we consider our text in Mark 8:27ff, it can be divided in four questions.

Before we consider those questions, it is well to be aware that two and one half years have passed in the ministry of Jesus Christ. During this time, his disciples have heard Jesus teaching and have seen Him perform different miracles. In our text today, we see how far Jesus ministry had gone in affecting His disciples' lives.

Actually, our text in Mark 8:27ff is a watershed passage, for after the happenings recorded here, Jesus begins to teach very directly about His upcoming death, burial, and bodily resurrection (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:30; 10:32). His steps begin to go toward Jerusalem and eventually to the cross.

Caesarea Philippi, mentioned in Mark 8:27, was in the far north at the source of the Jordan River in the foothill of Mt. Hermon. Jesus chose a remote and beautiful spot for this special time with His disciples. It was in the territory of Philip, and a great center of Baal worship, and also the site of a great temple to the Greek god, Pan.

How appropriate for Jesus, in this setting to be asking His disciples some very pertinent questions.

Note that first question.

I. Who do people say that I am? (Mark 8:27-28).

Jesus is now alone with His disciples. They have walked some 25 miles from Bethsaida, the scene of the most recent healing miracle (Mark 8:22-26).

The crowds are left behind. Jesus knows that it is time to see where the disciples are in their understanding of who He is. Certainly, He would know being God, but He wants them to verbalize it.

1. Jesus' first question.

His first question is very general, "Who do people say that I am?"

2. The disciples' answer.

The disciples' answer was that some thought Jesus was John the Baptist (like Herod in Mark 6:14 – that John the Baptist had come back from the grave). Others thought that Jesus was Elijah (Malachi 4:5), that prophet who would return to announce the coming of Messiah. Still, others thought that Jesus was just a prophet. Interesting that times haven't changed. Jesus is still only a good prophet today and nothing more.

II. Who do you say that I am? (Mark 8:29-30).

Now Jesus moves from the general to the specific concerning His identity. He asks His disciples, His learners of Him, who do they think Jesus is?

1. Jesus' second question.

"But who do you say that I am?"

2. The disciples' second answer.

Peter, the spokesman for the group, immediately gives the answer.

"You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). Matthew adds in Matthew 16:16, "The Son of the living God." Peter actually said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

3. The word, Messiah.

(1) Meaning of the word, Messiah.

The word, Christ, is Christos, anointed one, the Messiah.

(2) Usage of the word Messiah in the Old Testament.

The actual word, Messiah, is used in the Old Testament in Daniel 9:25&26, foretelling His coming. He would be the prophet, priest, and king, fulfilling all three offices.

(2) Mark's and Matthew's usage of the word, Messiah.

It's interesting that Mark only quotes Peter's words, "You are the Christ," while Matthew includes as well the "Son of the living God."

We need to remember that Mark's emphasis in writing to the Romans is on the humanity of Jesus, presenting Him as the servant, the man of action ministering to different people in various ways.

Peter using the words, "You are the Christ," stresses Christ's humanity, but in the word, Messiah, Christ's deity is also included, for the Messiah foretold would also be deity (Micah 5:2).

(3) Christ's usage of the word, Messiah.

In fact, Jesus referred to Himself as the Messiah in Mark 12:35-37. Jesus also acknowledged that He was the Messiah. When Jesus was asked by the High Priest in His trial before His crucifixion, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" What was Christ's answer? "I am . . ." (Mark 14:62).

Matthew in writing to the Jews, stresses to them that Jesus was not just their Messiah, He was also of the same substance as God the Father. He was deity in human flesh. He was the God-man. Any Jews who thought that Jesus was just another messiah of the day, would be challenged to believe that Jesus was the true Messiah because He was God's Son, truly deity.

It is well to note here that earlier in John 1:41, after Andrew heard John the Baptist say of Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God," he went and found his brother, Simon Peter, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah."

This may have been a hope at that time. But now after being with the Lord for some two and a half years, when Jesus asked the disciples who they thought He was, Peter quickly replied, "You are the Christ."

After months of Jesus' teaching and a ministry of miracles, the disciples knew and believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the One foretold in the Old Testament had come and they were serving with Him.

Jesus, of course, did not deny their confession of being their Messiah, for He was who they confessed Him to be.

At the same time, Jesus told His disciples to not tell anyone about their discovery (Mark 8:30).

Why did Jesus tell His disciples not to tell anyone who He really was?

- (1) The more people knew who He was would more than likely hinder His mission.
 (2) In addition, Jesus' disciples had a lot more to process about who Jesus was and what His mission was all about. The next few verses certainly give us this insight as Jesus began to tell His disciples about what is ultimate mission was in coming to planet earth.

Which means there is a third question here. It is not a question asked by Jesus of His disciples, but it is a question about Jesus mission.

III. What do you know about My (Jesus') mission? (Mark 8:31-33).

How commendable for the disciples to be convinced that Jesus was their longed for Messiah, the One foretold in the Old Testament. But they were not prepared for what Jesus would say in Mark 8:31.

1. Jesus' teaching (8:31-32a).

Jesus would suffer many things.
 Jesus would be rejected by the religious leaders.
 Jesus would be killed (and buried).
 Jesus would rise again bodily from the grave.

Then verse 32 tells us that Jesus was telling them plainly. The tense of the verb, plainly, indicates that Jesus repeatedly told them about His upcoming suffering, rejection, death, and bodily resurrection.

2. Peter's Response to Jesus' teaching (8:32b; Matthew 16:22).

Upon hearing Jesus' words, Peter took the Lord aside and began to rebuke Him. Rebuke means to reprimand, to censure, to reprove, and it is in the present tense.

It is a very strong word used by Christ to silence the demon (Mark 1:25) So Peter kept telling the Lord that what He said couldn't be true, why did He talk that way? Matthew adds here that Peter said, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you!"

Why did Peter talk this way to the One that He just acknowledged as his Messiah and really the Messiah of the nation of Israel?

Why did Peter display such "an air of conscious superiority?" For Peter was saying that he knew better than the Messiah did. Peter's plan was better than the Lord's plan? Really?

Peter, speaking for the other disciples, was convinced that the Messiah when He came would bring a political kingdom that would deliver the nation of Israel from the Roman oppression. The Messiah's kingdom would usher in a rule of peace and victory for Israel that would have jurisdiction over the rest the nations. They believed that they would rule with their Messiah in His glorious kingdom.

That's why James and John asked later if they could sit one on Jesus' right hand and one on His left hand in His glory (Mark 10:35-37). This was after Jesus' teaching here and later as well (cf. Mark 9:31-32; 10:32-34).

To Peter's and the disciples' way of thinking, suffering, death, and resurrection had no place in the life of the Messiah who they were expecting to bring in His kingdom of peace and prosperity for the nation of Israel. They expected power and glory not defeat and death.

3. Christ's response to Peter (Mark 8:33).

Jesus would not let arrogant, selfish, and misinformed Peter influence His ultimate mission on earth.

(1) Christ rebuked Peter.

The same word is used for Christ's rebuke of Peter as he used to rebuke the Lord. The Lord reprimanded Peter directly for His arrogance and lack of understanding of Christ's ultimate mission.

(2) Christ spoke directly to Peter.

"Get behind Me (A command in the present tense), Satan." Peter was to submit to the Lord at all times. He was to follow the Lord not run ahead of Him and think that he knew everything about God's plan. The same applies for all of us today.

Christ, in front of the disciples, tells Peter who just confessed to Jesus that He was the Messiah, that he was being used by Satan (not that he was Satan) to stop His ultimate mission on earth. How embarrassing that must have been for outspoken Peter.

No wonder Christ talked so strongly to Peter. For him to try and stop Jesus' ultimate mission on earth was to side with Satan whose desire was the same thing. Satan wanted Jesus to take the easier path, no cross, no death, no resurrection. To avoid such meant that Satan would not be defeated. The first promise of the Redeemer in Genesis 3:15 would not be fulfilled. God would be a liar. Here was the wilderness experience again. Follow Satan is the temptation, not submit to the Heavenly Father to accomplish redemption for the world. Here again, Christ is the Victor.

Christ adds, " You are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's" (Mark 8:33).

Man doesn't want a cross. Satan doesn't want a cross. Our selfish ambition believes that we get to heaven by our own good works which are really tainted with our sin. In fact for some, there is no heaven. **Satan's influence on the cults and the world religions either distorts the cross of Christ or denies the cross of Christ.**

What happened here in the time of Christ continues on in time. Man's heart has not changed. Satan's idea has not changed. No Cross then! No Cross now!!

Here Peter was right about who Jesus was, but totally wrong about what Jesus' ultimate mission was on planet earth.

How easy it is for the believer in Jesus Christ to acknowledge Him as personal Savior and live the selfish, rather fleshly, worldly life. One can be right about Christ and miss the freedom the believer has in Christ.

This leads to our last question. Again a question not asked by our Lord. But a question that comes from the text

IV. How can I follow Jesus wholeheartedly? (Mark 8:34-38).

Jesus now moves from talking just to His disciples to including the crowd that He summons to Himself.

Jesus gives this call to discipleship. He just talked to His disciples about His suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. He said that the cross was coming for Him.

Those who would follow Him as His disciples would also experience the cross.

One writer has said that Jesus does not "ask anything of us that He is not prepared to give Himself."

Notice the dynamics involved in being Jesus' disciple.

(1) If anyone wishes to come (once for all decision) after ME (Christ).

A decision must be made to accept Christ as one's personal Savior.

(2) He must deny himself. (aorist command – passive voice - Do this once for all, but it is done with God's help, in the power of the Holy Spirit not in one's self).

Not deny who one is as a person (we are all made in the image of God with infinite value) but who one is on the inside (the old nature), filled with selfishness, arrogance, lust, covetousness, laziness spiritually, intimidating people, stretching the truth, wrong thoughts, attitudes and actions.

(3) Take up his cross – (aorist command - once for all action – not an option). It must be done in following the Lord. That is put to death the old thoughts, attitudes, and actions, say, “No,” to sin, and “yes” to God’s righteousness (Romans 6:11-14). Die to selfishness and all that includes.

(4) Follow Me. (follow is a command in the present tense).

Putting to death the old nature in the power of the Holy Spirit the disciple of Christ then lives in the new nature, the resurrection life of Christ. Dying to the old nature, now the believer can display the righteousness of Christ.

The disciple of Christ is to continually **follow Jesus Christ**, be an imitator of Him all of His life on earth. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciple of Christ is to seek to live in the resurrection life he possesses by having believed in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

What’s involved in following Christ?

1. It’s not saving one’s life (8:35a).

The individual who tries to live his life on his own in his way of thinking will lose His life. Will not go to heaven when he passes from this life.

2. It’s losing one’s life for Christ and the gospel’s sake (8:35b).

The one who goes the way of the cross, will find his life, for it will count in time for all eternity.

3. It’s not gaining the world, for that is forfeiting one’s own soul (8:36).

Gaining the world brings no eternal reward, only eternal loss. It is foolish to sacrifice eternity for the moment.

4. It involves being willing to be a witness for Christ as He gives opportunity (8:38).

Stand up for the Lord, don’t be ashamed of Him and His cross.

The famous words of Jim Elliott who died a missionary martyr in Ecuador at the age of 29 still ring throughout God’s kingdom:

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

To follow Jesus as a disciple is costly business but rewarding business. It is the way of death to self that in the Spirit’s power activates the new life in Christ bringing eternal rewards. For some it may mean martyrdom. For others it may mean hardships of different kinds. For all of us who are disciples of Christ, it means seeking to put Him first in our lives in all that we think, say, and do.

It’s not knowing who Christ is as personal Savior, and being wrong in how I live for HIM.

Rather, it is knowing Christ as my personal Savior, and in the power of the Holy Spirit letting His resurrection life flow through me to the glory of God.

That’s what the communion service is a reminder for us today.

Through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, eternal life has been won for us. Through faith in Christ, in the Spirit’s power, as followers of Christ, we can say “no” to the old selfish ways, and “yes” to the new life in Jesus Christ. Death has come, but resurrection life, eternal life is available to all who accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior and live for HIM!!

**“Broken bread and poured out wine, Jesus make my heart that kind.
Where love has bled and self has died, like broken bread and poured out wine.
Not my will but yours I choose, no matter what I stand to lose.
For Lord you said you’d fill a life that’s broken bread and poured out wine.**

That is right thinking and right living to the glory of God!

