

The Suffering Messiah  
Mark 8:22

Isaiah 53

Ephesians 2:1-18

Congregation 1 Peter 4:1-10

Today we are looking at the last half of Chapter 8 where if you notice when we read it this morning about half way through there was a shift of focus. Up until this point it has been a quick, fast paced summary of Jesus ministry. His arrival being foretold by John the Baptist, his appearance and baptism. Followed by the 40 days of temptation by Satan in the wilderness. Then he returns and calls to himself specific set of people to be his disciples and followers. Then follows his ministry, records of healing and other miracles, a few run ins with the religious leaders of Israel, followed by a brief ministry across the Sea of Galilee into the Gentile territory. And now we see a shift starting in verse 27.

Jesus ministry turns and he directs his focus more toward his disciples. Up until this point he would teach to the multitudes in parables, then later instruct his disciples in the meaning of those parables. Also we see that Jesus leaves this area, up until this point he has been staying in the same general area, bouncing back and forth and up and down around the Sea of Galilee, now we see that he is going to start making his journey into Jerusalem. Also as we continue through the rest of this book we will notice that up until this point Jesus always instructed people who had come to faith to keep silent and to tell no one, but from his revelation to his disciples here in this chapter onward we will find that that is no longer the case. Up until this point Jesus disciples seemed to not grasp the full implication as to who Jesus truly was. Always being taken by doubt, and fear not fully trusting, not fully understanding.

But in this later half, that is not the case. While they confess and believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised one sent from God. They still have a hard time understanding that he has come a suffering servant sent to die, and not the ruling king over Israel that they were expecting. So in our text this morning starting out in verse 22 we see that Jesus arrives here at Bethsaida and is immediately met by some people who have brought with them a blind man. The positioning of the telling of this account is one of interest, for it follows shortly after Jesus' charge to the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisee's and of Herod, to which it then continues to instruct them being astounded at their yet lack of understanding. Previously in chapter 7, the miraculous healing of the deaf man with the speech impediment is positioned similarly as this one is in this chapter.

In verse 14, of chapter 7 Jesus calls the multitudes to himself and says. "Hear me everyone, and understand." Then he gives the parable that a man is not defiled by what enters him, but rather by what comes out of him. And he says again in verse 16, "if anyone has ears to hear, let them hear." Then later, he explained this parable to his disciples once again astounded at this lack of understanding, verse 18. "So he said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods? There fore what ever comes out of a man is what defiles him, for from within out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

Then this teaching is followed by the healing of the deaf man. Implying that hearing comes from God. Our understanding must be enlightened, our ability to hear and understand is only because God has made us able to do so. And here we see the same positioning with this miracle of returning sight to the blind man. It is positioned right after his instruction about the leaven of the pharisees. To be careful to not be tempted, corrupted, and lead astray by false teachers and liars. Then Jesus heals this blind man, making him able to see and I think just like with the deaf man the position of this account has a purpose.

Just like the other account, seeing the disciples lack of ability to understand and see what Jesus was talking about, it goes to show that it is God who gives sight to the blind making those who are incapable of seeing the kingdom of heaven, and Jesus as the God man, to now be able to recognize him. But I think it also goes further than that, in his charge to not be deceived by false teachers and liars bares with it the same sort of implication. How are we to discern and know who are false teachers and liars? As we talked about last week, it is apparent that this is a real threat to Christians, not just to the disciples then, but to us now. So how are we supposed to discern a false teacher? Well, it is by sight of course, having the ability to see through their false teaching. To see that it does not edify and point to God, but rather to themselves, to lift themselves up, to prop up their own purpose and agenda.

But it isn't just their agenda that is what is troubling, it isn't just the fact that they are looking to market the faith, to dupe people into sending them money, but it is the deception of Satan is the most troubling aspect of a false teacher. Satan is the father of lies, but also appears as an angel of light. What better way to entrap and ensnare people and insulate them from the gospel than to entangle them in a false belief, giving them a sense of self worth, a false sense of faith and security instead of the truth of being a lost and fallen person in need of a savior. That is the real threat of the leaven of the pharisee's, of false teaching. It produces a false faith making one numb to the truth of the gospel because they believe that are already righteous before God.

That was the error of the pharisee's. Their righteousness was in their nationality, in their keeping of the law and being the physical descendants of Abraham. And it is this false hope and belief that shut them out from the very one who all of these things were talking about. Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the law, and established a better covenant in his blood. But before we can hear and understand, and see the kingdom of God we must be granted the ability by God, through a miraculous healing of our blind and deaf souls making us through his grace able see and hear, and to act out in faith and repentance toward him. Without this miraculous intervention in our souls, we would continue in our sins and on our path to judgment. The second implication of this miraculous spiritual healing is not only our new found ability to come to Jesus in faith and worship, but it also works through the holy spirit to grant discernment.

We need to be wary of the false teachings around us, we need to be smart and attentive to God's word so that we will not be duped. I believe it is completely possible for a believer to be deceived and duped into following false teaching, for a time. But if the Holy Spirit truly does indwell that person, they will not be there for very long for God's spirit will reveal it to them. And if not, if a person continues in following false teachers, prophets, or keeps finding themselves jumping from one false teaching to another, I ask, what do you think that says about the Holy Spirit in their lives?

While of course it is true that we can not ultimately know if this person, or that person is truly a son of God, or more likely may be called one day. We have been given quite a bit of instruction on the subject in scripture as to what a follower of Christ behaves like, and one who seems to be constantly deceived into false doctrines, crazy teachings about the power of positive thinking, or caught up in the health and wealth ministries, or the name it and claim it teachings, or some new unlocked understanding of the bible, does not line up with what the bible says a believer is to look like. All of these being unbiblical, twisted deceptions of Satan derived from deliberate false understanding and use of scripture set forth to deceive, and to lead away from Christ.

Without the new birth and indwelling of the holy spirit, we are blind and deceived. But once we have been made to see, we should no longer be caught up in such foolishness. Having our hearts and minds renewed by the new birth in the blood of Christ. Which brings us to verse 27 here this morning. "Now Jesus and his disciples went out of the towns of Caesarea Philippi and on the road he asked his disciples saying to them. "Who do men think that I am. So they answered and said, John the Baptist, but some say Elijah, and others one of the prophets. He said to them, but who do you say that I am? Peter answered and said to him. You are the Christ. Then he strictly warned them that they should tell no one about him."

This confession here of Peter is a new one, what we have seen up to this point is his disciples questioning. As we saw in chapter 4 with the calming of the storm. After Jesus had rebuked the wind, saying peace, but still he said to them, Why are you so fearful, how is it you still have no faith? And they feared exceedingly and said to one another, Who can this be, that even the wind and sea obey him. But here, we see Peter confess, we know who you are, you are the Christ, the messiah, the savior. But just like his account of the blind man being healed, in stages, we see that the disciples ability to see and understand has also come in stages, first was misunderstanding as to who Jesus was, and now even though the disciples see that Jesus is indeed the messiah, they only see dimly, faintly, a have a blurry understanding like this man who said I see men like trees walking. They have yet been granted full understanding, and we see that here in the later half of this account.

Up until this point there has been no confession by anyone outside of God, or the demon's that Jesus has cast out, or Mark in his narration of this account. Peter's confession here is the first record here in Mark of a person confessing Jesus as the messiah. And While it maybe Peter who spoke up, it is easily understood that this is agreed upon and understood by the other 11 disciples as well. By this time The disciples have finally understood that Jesus was more than Elijah, more than John the Baptist, and more than the prophets of old, he was not just another great teacher in the line of Moses and other heroes of the old testament, but rather he was the fulfillment of what they had spoke of. To Quote James Edwards here, he said. " To liken Jesus to John, Elijah, or a prophet was to rank him among the stellar figures in Israel's long and illustrious history. That is an indication of Jesus' preeminent standing in the popular mind. Yet even these comparisons are inadequate. Even if Jesus were a new Moses, or Elijah, it would simply designate him as the reemergence and fulfillment of an earlier prototype. To say that Jesus is like these, or as we often hear today that he was one of the greatest teachers or moral example who ever lived, while it may seem like an honor and compliment, it is ultimately to deny his uniqueness and to press him into the service of old categories. It is to pour new wine into old wine skins. The authority that Jesus has demonstrated throughout Mark's narrative does not allow him to be defined by something other than himself and his relationship with the Father."

And we see here, in this statement of Peter, that the disciples are now beginning to understand this. It would seem that Jesus in this line of questioning is testing his disciples. He was beginning his journey to Jerusalem, and to his death which is going to be a journey in suffering not only for Jesus himself but a monumental test of faith for his disciples. In the following verses here we can see that still the understanding of the disciples is quite limited. Here in this passage is the first time in this book that Jesus speaks plainly about his purpose. Verse 31. "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

This probably confused the disciples because that was probably not their idea of the Messiah. As we have said before the Jews idea was that the Messiah would come and reestablish the temple, and Israel as a nation and powerful kingdom. But here Jesus says he has come to die. Jesus was everything that the Jewish mind was not expecting. Instead of being the one who would expound and re institute the Torah he taught in parables, explaining the inbreaking of God's kingdom and forgiveness of sinners. Instead of teaching the Laws and Traditions he instead teaches their true meaning and purpose. But he was more than just a messianic teacher, or prophet, he is the messiah, the Son of God who has come into this world to reconcile it the Father through his death. As we have seen, he forgives sins, has power and authority over nature and speaks for God, and not only that, he speaks as God.

Jesus message about his purpose was not the victorious and successful ministry that was expected of the promised Messiah. It was one about rejection, suffering and death. But the reality is, that Jesus did come in victory, through rejection, suffering, and death he became victorious over sin, hell and the grave. To become the first fruits of all those who believe and have died, as it says in 1 Corinthians 15:20. "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christs at his coming.

We can see that in Peters response in verse 32 " He spoke this word openly, Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. The word used here for rebuke , epitiman, is the same used in the accounts of casting out demons. It is pretty clear that Peter could not reconcile this suffering Christ with his idea of the conquering Christ. Jesus response here seems a little over the top, rebuking Peter, saying get out of my sight Satan. But we must remember a few things. 1<sup>st</sup> off is the earlier warning about the leaven of the pharisee's and herod. That in reality, half truths, or near truths are extremely dangerous , more so then obvious error. Peters response here was not one of a follower, but he was inserting his own belief and desire upon what Christ said, and in his mind he was correcting him and making him straight. The messiah was to come to conquer, not to suffer and die. Again we see the disciples second guessing Jesus' purpose and intention and in practice are attempting to put a stop to God's soveriegn plan.

To Jesus, his suffering and death was inevitable, it was his purpose and why he had come, but to the Peter it was an abomination, something that just could not be. So Peter stands before the Son of God, and corrects him, putting himself as the one with authority and playing God sort to speak, any time that we think that we know better then God, that thought is not from God, but rather from Satan. That is why Jesus said, get behind me Satan. It was not that Peter had become possessed, or any such thing, but rather it was that his thought process, and actions were not of one who was a follower God, but were rather satanic.

After Jesus rebukes Peter, he turns to the crowd that he had gathered to himself. This was likely his disciples that had followed him, not just the 12 but others as well and he instructs them. In his prophetic telling of his purpose that he had come to suffer, to die, and to rise again in 3 days he told his disciples plainly what must happen, and what the purpose of his coming was. And here, in the last verses we see that he then instructs the disciples what it means to be a disciple as well. "He said to them, Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? OR what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Whoever is ashamed of ME and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him the son of man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels. This is not the idea that we have today of bearing a cross or taking up a cross as figure of speech to hardships and trials. But this is the cross of death as we see explained here clearly. We must remember that this book was written to the churches under Roman rule, and it is believed to be around the reign of Nero who was crucifying Christians. This statement of Jesus would weigh heavy on the disciples there who heard it, as well as the Christians who Mark was writing to. This usage of the cross imagery signifies a disciples total allegiance to Christ, that he would suffer the same fate, the same death as the messiah.

To the Disciples this was a warning, that suffering was coming, and that following Christ is a life of trials and suffering. It is not your best life now, it is not health and wealth with all of your desires fulfilled if you have enough faith. Whoever desires to follow Christ, must deny himself and take up his own death and follow him. Resigning yourself to be dead in this world, but alive in Christ. A follower of Christ is one who puts Christ above all things even their own life. And this life that is gained through Christ is far superior to any life or treasure gained here on earth for as he says in verse 36. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" This life is temporary, it will end, but the soul lives on in eternity. Which is more important, to suffer in this life and live in glory in the eternal life, or to gain the whole world and spend an eternity in suffering.

This is the true test, the true requirement of being a disciple of Christ. One who lays down his life and follows him. Let us do a little exercise here using this test of true discipleship. Think of all of these teachers, and preachers that we mentioned about last week, who deceive and twist the bible leading people astray. The ones whose message is not about fulfilling the ministry that Christ desires, but rather about fulfilling your own desires, your own comforts. If we take this test of faith, and discipleship and apply this test to their theology, what will that show? Is saying a statement over and over in quote unquote faith, so that God owes us some sort of blessing because of our action, is that taking up our cross, laying down our life? Is that Relying on God and truly seeking his will, even if it is to suffer, even if it is unto death? Or is it rather taking up the whole world, to gain that which you desire, that which you seek?

God did not say follow him and I will make your life a perfect paradise. He says, follow me, take up your cross, suffer, and die for me. And whoever desires to save his own life, will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, and the gospels will save it.