



gracefellowship

Mark: Following Christ to the Cross
May 10, 2020
Life's Greatest Question

:: Mark 8:27-30

Introduction: When you have an important question to ask someone, where you ask it can almost be as important as what you ask! When I was getting ready to propose marriage to Heather she had warned me that I better not make that event a public spectacle, like at a sporting event. She did not want to see her name pop up on a scoreboard and then look over to see me on one knee with a bucket of popcorn in one hand and a ring in the other. I was told emphatically that she would say “no!” if that happened.

- Illustration: Failed proposal at Spurs basketball game

Why am I telling you these stories this morning? Because Jesus has come to a time in His ministry and in His relationship with the disciples that He has an important question to ask them, so He brings them to a very specific place to ask it.

:: Mark 8:27

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?”

Jesus took his disciples to the northern most part of Israel to a location known as Caesarea Philippi. The city is about 35 miles north of Galilee, where Jesus spends the majority of his time. This was a city that had been designated for the worship of many Roman gods, including the Ceasars. On the hilltop of the city was a gleaming marble temple dedicated to the godhead of the Caesars. This was a place people declared their allegiances to the gods.

- There was a massive stone wall that had a cave like entrance cut into it. Deep in the cave was a water source that fed the Jordan River.
- Caesarea Philippi was originally a place of worship to the god Pan- who was the god of shepherds and was also the god of fertility.
- People would bring sheep to the mouth of this cave and throw them down into the water below as a sacrifice to Pan.
- The city was a place of spiritual darkness. In fact, it came to be known as the gates of hell.

And it's in that setting Jesus asks His disciples the most important question of their lives.

He begins by simply asking what people believe about Him: who do the crowds say I am? Let's look at how they answer the question:

:: Mark 8:28

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

- John the Baptist (perhaps people thought Jesus embodied the spirit of John)
- Elijah- The greatest of all Prophets in the OT.
- One of the Prophets- If not Elijah, one of the great prophets who spoke for God- a prophetic voice had not been heard in Israel since Malachi.

In our culture there are a lot of ways people look at Jesus if we were to ask, "Who do people say Jesus is?":

- Good, moral teacher
- Full of love- but not justice (soft)
- Not real // Crutch
- Genie in a bottle // Helps me out of tight spots

Then Jesus gets more personal and points the same question to the disciples:

29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

"But what about you? Who do you say I am?"

And Peter nails the answer! "You are the Messiah."

Matthew's gospel records Peter saying: "You are the Son of the Living God."

In case this goes over your head this morning, this is THE question of questions! This is the most important question you will answer in your life.

The most important question for every person on earth to answer is: "Who do I say Jesus is?"

What about you? Who do you say Jesus is? This is a deeply personal decision, but it's one all of us have to wrestle with.

Why is this question so important?

What we believe about Jesus determines how we live out our days.

What we believe about Jesus determines our eternal destiny.

There is more on the line here than just having the right answer for the test! Who Jesus is in your eyes will determine how you live. We are going to talk more about that in a few minutes.

Text: After Peter answered Jesus's question, Jesus warned them not to tell anyone! Why?!

They didn't understand the fullness of what it meant for Jesus to be the Messiah! They still had the idea that Jesus was coming to be a leader who would overthrow Rome and give Israel their kingdom back. They were looking for someone like King David from the Old Testament. Jesus had other things in mind and for the first time, he starts to let the disciples know his plans.

:: Mark 8:31-33

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, 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 when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

When Jesus starts talking about dying, Peter gets bent out of shape! The Messiah he wants doesn't die; He sets up a kingdom for Israel! Again, this is why Jesus doesn't want them talking about Him being the Messiah yet. So, Jesus rebukes Peter- he actually calls him Satan- and then tells Peter he doesn't have in mind the concerns of God but merely has human concerns.

- Human Concerns: Build an earthly kingdom and rule over things.
- God's Concerns: Save people from their sins and restore a perfect relationship between God and His children.

Matthew's gospel actually details a little more of what Peter said and how Jesus responded to him.

:: Matthew 16:15-18

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

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

In this locations were dead men were worshiped as gods, Peter makes the claim that Jesus is the Son of the living God! Jesus uses the surroundings to make his

next point. This place was known as the gates of hell, so Jesus says on the confession Peter made Jesus was build His Church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it!

- Gates are defensive measures
- The Church is meant to be on the offensive
- Jesus came as a conquering King to liberate people from the grip of sin and steal them out of the clutches of hell.

Jesus coming to earth was a rescue mission! We all feel the weight of our brokenness and the brokenness of the world. Things in this world are not as they should be because of the effects of sin. But the way God fixes the brokenness is through helping us see the concerns of God. Then God puts us on mission with Him to storm the gates of hell and take the light of the gospel to the darkest places around us.

God wants to change our hearts by forgiving our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus. That's why from this point on in Mark's gospel we are going to see Jesus begin walking to Jerusalem. The next two chapters in Mark will describe the things Jesus did on his journey to Jerusalem and then chapters 11-15 will zero in on the final week of Jesus' life.

Text: For those who "get it" and want to be a follower of Jesus, we need to understand what that takes.

:: Mark 8:34-38

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their 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 them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

The question we started asking this morning that I said is a question of life and death gets even more clarity here.

If you say Jesus is the Messiah, this is what it looks like to follow Him:

- **Deny yourself**
- **Take up your cross**
- **Follow Jesus**

Being a disciple of Jesus means we put our personal plans and desires aside by

dying to our sinful ways. And we do that daily. Every day we have to take up our cross. The cross is an instrument of death. We die to evil and sin, fighting in the power of the Holy Spirit every day in order to follow Jesus.

Where is Jesus calling you to follow Him?

- Neighbors (diagram on screen)
- Local missions

We can't go global, but we should always be focused on local ministry.

If you don't know Jesus today, the most important question of life is in front of you. I want to encourage you to listen for the voice of God today calling out to you. He wants a relationship with you. Coming to Jesus is as simple as believing in faith that Jesus is God's Son, repenting of your sins and beginning to follow Him daily. The best way to do that is in relationship with people who are already following Jesus and can show you how to do that.

Pray