



gracefellowship

Easter
April 21, 2019
Life or Death Decision

:: 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 I knew that I wanted it to be special. I took her to our favorite restaurant that night- but I didn't want to ask her to marry me in the restaurant. So I had planned to ask her in an outdoor setting around a small pond with a fountain in the middle of it. I had a jewelry box for her to open and in the drawers of the box were movie ticket stubs we had seen together, notes she had written me, and little things that were meaningful to us. The idea was to walk down memory lane of our relationship before she opened the final compartment, in which would be her engagement ring. The only problem was that the night we went out, it poured down rain! My plans for a romantic place to propose were shot! I didn't know what to do, so after the dinner date we just ended up back at her apartment with her roommates! I finally got her to go to her room where we could be alone for a few minutes and I gave her the gift and ended up proposing in her bedroom! Not exactly the place I had envisioned asking this life-changing question!

I'm telling you that story to illustrate the importance of the location we are going to see Jesus ask His disciples a life-changing question. In fact, the question Jesus asks is a question all of us have to wrestle with- it's a question of life and death!

:: Mark 8:27-30

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 Baptist; 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 Messiah."

30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus took his disciples to the northern most part of Israel to a location known as

Caesarea Philippi. This was a city that had been designated for the worship of many Greek gods. 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. 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?

- John the Baptist
- Elijah
- One of the Prophets

Then Jesus gets more personal and says, "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 question that leads to a life or death decision.

The life and death decision for every person on earth comes from how we answer the question: "Who do I say Jesus is?"

There are a lot of ways people look at Jesus:

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

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 it a question of life and death?

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' 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.

:: John 3:17

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

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.

We want to...

- save the planet
- make government more efficient
- find a cure for the human condition
- eradicate poverty and sickness
- build up science and religion

God wants to change our hearts by forgiving our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

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.

Here's what Jesus tells us comes as a result: Life!

"Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

But this isn't just a question of life- it's a question of life and death. So Jesus gives us a hard truth to chew on.

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."

- You can decide He is not your Savior and go on with life just the way it is. But you need to know that one day you will stand before the Jesus you choose not to place your faith in and He will not allow you into His Kingdom.
- Rejecting Jesus on earth means being rejected by Him for eternity.

In the OT Moses gave the people of Israel a visual reminder of what it meant to accept or reject the ways of God as they went into the Promised Land. He put half the tribes of Israel on one hillside and the other half on a second hillside with a valley between them. One set of tribes called out blessings, while the other set of tribes called out curses! Then Moses gave a challenge to the people:

:: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.

16 For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in

obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them,

18 I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

19 This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

20 and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life...