

# The Gospel of Mark – Peter’s Confession

## The Key to Finding Your Life

### Mark 8:22-38

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



Expectations are powerful things, aren't they? They shape, influence, and direct our decisions. I grew up in a working-class city that had long been defined by the steel industry. However, by the time I was growing up, the steel industry was just a fraction of what it once was. A shell of a once great and thriving sector. With that reality came the expectation that to have a prosperous life, I needed to get a college degree and get out of Western, PA. This expectation was shaped both by economic realities and people who loved me and wanted the best for me. Now, looking back after twenty years of moving away to get a degree and build a life, I can see that those voices were partially right. The borough I grew up in is struggling significantly. The region, though, has largely reinvented itself in ways no one had thought possible all those years back then. Expectations are powerful, and they have altered the course of my life.

As we walk through the Gospel of Mark, we see that very truth in the lives of those who encounter Jesus, their expectations are powerful and influential. Peter and the other disciples were among the various groups that had expectations for the Messiah. Who he would be. What he would do. And what life would be like once he arrived and took over. Their expectations were shaped by all sorts of realities and factors. What we see in their story isn't just that expectations shape our perceptions, they do. But, that our expectations often determine what we think is possible or could happen. The expectations of the disciples caused them to struggle to see Jesus clearly. Others missed him altogether. So, Jesus would teach the disciples and the crowds so that they might reorient their expectations and see him for who he truly was even if his logic seemed upside down to them. At the core of seeing Jesus clearly and cutting through our misplaced expectation is beginning to realize, that, **what I think will save me... may not.**

# 1. "You are the Christ."

## a. You are the one who can save me (us).

- i. **The term "Messiah" originates from the Hebrew word for "anointed one" and is transliterated as "Christ" in Greek.** In ancient Judaism, a messiah was an anointed king or prophet. In Second Temple Judaism, the messiah held apocalyptic significance as a political ruler expected to grant self-governance to the Jewish people.
- ii. It was so close, and yet, he was misinformed by wrong expectations.
  1. Peter is not living in a vacuum. He, the other disciples, the crowds, and the religious leaders are all facing very real pressures, issues, and problems.
  2. Remember, Peter's declaration comes after being with Jesus for over two very full years of life and ministry.

## iii. What does Peter mean by this?

1. **Most literally, Peter means that Jesus is the anointed one from God who will save him and Israel from their daily afflictions.**

## iv. In other words, what did he / they need saved from?

1. The first-century world was as complicated and real as ours is. And they were people with real needs and struggles just as we are.
  - a. **Their political systems were a mess.** → Oppression and inequality was the standard operating procedures. Hope of justice was a fleeting idea reserved for about 30% of the population who had any level of citizenship.
  - b. **Taxes were out of control and not regulated.** → Rome dispatched local tax collectors to get their money and did not care how they got it or what those tax collectors took for themselves.
  - c. **Food instability and economic pressures were a reality.** → Where would their next meal come from? Would a famine come through? Could they eke out an actual living under the Romans?
2. **Our world is complicated and burdened in similar ways.**
  - a. **Our political systems are a mess** → How many of us today are confused, disenfranchised, or just frankly disappointed in our political structures? Or, how many of us have doubled down and believe that political systems will save us?
  - b. **Economic pressures** → How many of us are feeling the realities of the last several years? The wild swings in the housing market? Food prices?
  - c. **A safer and more stable world for our kids.** → How many of us feel the very real and honorable desire to enable our kids to live in a better world?
3. **We're not the exact same situation as they were then, but we do need to wrestle with the same truths that Jesus presented to them.**
  - a. **We have to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"**

## v. Jesus is not the God who merely wants to satisfy your desires. He is the God who wants to reorder and restore your life.

1. **v.33** – There is a different way to understand the world and the events of our lives. Peter was not considering the Godly purposes or looking through the Godly lens. We can be gracious to him in this moment, he has not experienced the resurrection or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit yet. But, we are just like Peter,

aren't we? Our natural inclination is not to look through the Godly lens, instead we look through a carnal lens. To help explain what he means, Jesus explains, and his explanation to us is very upside down logic.

2. **So often, we look to any real thing (person, relationship, career, activity, items, etc) to simply satisfy our desires.**
  - a. This results in us getting caught on a hamster wheel where we chase and chase and never really find what we're looking for in any real or permanent way. And that is exhausting! So we come to the point where we reject desire itself, but find not even that works.
  - b. If the things of this age could completely satisfy us then the wealthiest and most prosperous among us would be our model and never discontent. But, they're not. We see this everyday, and yet we think it will be different for us.
3. Jesus tells Peter, the disciples, and the crowds that there is a different way they need to look at the world if they truly want to find what they're looking for.
4. **Yes, Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one of God, but he has come not merely to satisfy our desires, he has come to restore us and offer us an entirely new life.**
  - a. The challenge for us, is that this new life requires a new perspective and the logic of that perspective seems upside down to us.

## 2. Upside-down Logic

- a. Whoa, Jesus, aren't you being a little harsh? (v.33)
  - i. Why does he call Peter "Satan"? Doesn't that seem a little harsh? I think the answer is fairly simple. Satan once offered Jesus a shortcut—he could have all the kingdoms of the world, without going to the cross (Matthew 4:8–9; Luke 4:5–7). Peter's "teaching" is taking a page right out of that playbook. **Jesus explains the flaw with Peter's thinking: "For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (Mark 8:33).** Jesus knows he will not fit earthly expectations. The disciples are going to have to let go of worldly thinking in order to embrace the things of God—Jesus' death and resurrection. This teaching is not just for the disciples but for the crowds as well (v 34). The cross is the point of contention, and so Jesus now clarifies: he is indeed a King who will one day come in glory (v 38), but he is also one who carries a cross.<sup>1</sup>
  - ii. Jesus is making a point here, the logic that Peter is applying is not the logic of God but the logic of the ruler of this age, Satan. Peter is trying to hold Jesus to the worldly desires of a messiah and not understanding what God wants to do.
    1. **Yes, Jesus rebukes Peter, but he does so because following the logic Peter is applying is what has led the Pharisees to a place of unwillingness to believe. It has serious consequences and Jesus treats it as such. But, instead of scolding and moving on, Jesus patiently teaches once again.**
- b. **In order to gain the very thing you really desire, you must give that desire up. (v.34ff)**
  - i. Not from a Buddhist desire is the root of evil perspective. But in the pursuit of something that is noble, true, beautiful and eternal.

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Meyer, *Mark for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God's Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2022), 121.

- ii. The message of the cross is just as counter-cultural in our day. It seems so upside down. How is losing your life the way to save your life? We are often told to “have it your way” and “follow your heart.” This message cuts against that grain. Jesus already taught that following your heart is a path that leads to death, not life. “For from within, *out of the heart of man*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21–23, my emphasis). We have to learn to say a profound no to some of our deepest longings. Proverbs 14:12 states this point with crystal clarity: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” The world constantly pursues the things that seem right to them. You get ahead by getting more stuff—saying yes to what you want all the time. Self-denial seems like the path of loss, not gain. But let’s say that you are so wildly successful in your quest to say yes to yourself that you end up gaining the whole world. Is it worth it to gain the world and lose your soul (Mark 8:36)?<sup>2</sup>
- iii. **This is not the logic of our age.**
  - 1. “A stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles.” – Cor. 1:23
  - 2. **Fragments of truth in culture. In Jesus, we get the whole truth. And it is the whole truth that will set us free!**
    - a. Peter was working with fragments of truth, but Jesus wants him to see and live in the whole truth.
    - b. Our desires for safety, stability, and even the fulfilment of our desires are really echoes of our need to experience what is true, noble, lovely, and eternal. → It is reflective of what we were created for.
    - c. Culture hints at those things. But, the things of this ae can never deliver. Instead, we are offered shortcuts that lead us off track even more.
  - 3. **What are the fragments of truth in our culture that are prompting you to consider what is noble, lovely, true, and eternal?**
- c. **Satan always offers us a shortcut.**
  - i. In Jesus’ wilderness Temptation, Satan routinely offered Jesus a shortcut. (cf. Luke 4) Jesus refused to settle for the shortcut.
  - ii. Let’s Rewind even further, this is the problem of the fall of humanity in Genesis. A good God has made a good world and humanity settled for a shortcut that brought pain and suffering.
    - 1. Remember, love is not love if there is no choice. But, God did not ask them to love him without evidence. He showed, taught, and provided for Adam and Eve. Their love and trust of God was never asked to be on “blind terms” nor was it without instruction of what it meant to freely choose life apart from God.
    - 2. **What are the shortcuts of this age that promise things they could never deliver?**
- iii. **Peter wants Jesus to take the shortcut, Jesus won’t.**
  - 1. The suggestion that he should refuse the passion may be construed as a temptation coming from Satan himself who desires to thwart the divine plan of salvation (cf. Chs. 1:12 f.; 3:23ff.). The sharpness of the rebuke stems from the suggestion of disobedience to God’s will and the frustration of a course of events which will lead to the enthronement of the Son of Man, the achievement of the salvation of his elect, and the judgment of the world (Ch. 8:38). Jesus, therefore,

<sup>2</sup> Jason Meyer, *Mark for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God’s Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2022), 121–122.

unmasks the source of Peter's thought and commands him to return to his rank as a true disciple.<sup>3</sup>

**d. What Jesus is offering us here is a pathway to our greatest good, and it runs straight through him.**

- i. The writer of Ecclesiastes was King Solomon. The man with 300 wives and 700 concubines. He says in the beginning of the book of Ecclesiastes, which is all about finding your greatest good, that he had all the pleasures of this age. And, when he says all, he means ALL! (Ecc. 2:10) Yet, what did he find at the end of it all?
  1. **Ecc. 12:13 - "Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty."**
- ii. Received vs achieved. → Exhausted vs Free
  1. When we live as if we can achieve our own greatest good, we end up exhausted and losing the very thing we hoped to gain. But, when we receive this new identity through surrendering to Jesus, we gain the very thing we wanted all along!
- iii. Jesus isn't offering or talking about some mild or vanilla existence. He is talking about a total transformation. (Mk. 9:1)
  1. **The coming of God's kingdom with power has a lot more to do with the radical defeat of deep-rooted evil than with the destruction of the good world that God made and loves.** Jesus seems to think that evil will be defeated, and the kingdom will come, precisely through his own suffering and death.<sup>4</sup>
  2. But, this will only come through his suffering. And it will only come for us if we surrender to him.
- iv. **Baptism** – This morning we have baptisms as part of our worship service.
  1. Baptism is a public declaration of an inward commitment to follow Jesus. That is to die to self and live now in a new identity. The very thing that Jesus teaches here in Mark 8.
  2. Baptism reminds us that what we think will save us... may not.
    - a. In baptism, we hear the reality that Jesus is still in the business of changing lives. And that through him, we find our greatest good.

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<sup>3</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 304.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 112.