

The Confession of Peter

Mark 8:22-38 (CGS#12)

INTRODUCTION: This Sunday is Easter – Resurrection Sunday. Holy Week started with the Triumphal Entry, where Jesus descended into Jerusalem via the Mount of Olives, and as he did, the crowd shouted, “Hosanna!” Hosanna means, “Save us!” On Friday, Jesus was crucified, and his disciples buried him in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. But then, Sunday morning and the resurrection! The resurrection changed everything for them then and changes everything for us today. Why? Because Jesus defeated the very thing that none of us could overcome, death itself. In fact, when we get baptized, we declare that very fact. Baptism is the public declaration of a private commitment to follow Jesus. The symbolism of baptism is that we once were dead, but as we are buried with Christ through his work on the Cross, we are then brought back to new life through his resurrection. In other words, the action of baptism doesn’t save us, but it declares the reality of the gospel in our lives. How beautiful!

And as we continue in the Gospel of Mark, we are reminded of Mark’s purpose, that we might see Jesus clearly and follow him accordingly. Mark has experienced the power of the resurrection and knows that Jesus is the true Messiah, but as we keep seeing, many struggle to see that. In the closing of chapter 8, Peter will make a profound and important declaration, “You are the Christ!” And Peter is right. Yet, he will still struggle to wrap his head around all that it means for Jesus to be the Christ (Messiah). So, Jesus teaches the disciples about all that it means. And they will continue to be slow learners. Why? Not because they lack intellect or because they are so hard-hearted that they are unwilling to see Jesus or learn. That attitude, by and large, is the position of the Pharisees. The disciples were wrestling with their own personal expectations of who the Messiah was and what he would do. All this talk about being rejected and delivered over to the authorities, put to death, and then resurrection after three days seemed so odd to them. That isn’t how the Messiah is supposed to act... dead messiahs are false messiahs. Again, they are partly right. Dead messiahs are false messiahs, but Jesus wasn’t going to stay in the grave because he is the true Messiah. A fact that Jesus knows, and so he tells them that they are thinking with the wrong perspective and through the wrong lens. That is they are looking through a worldly/human lens, and instead, they need to look through God’s lens. Once they do this, it will all be clear. Today we have the gift of hindsight, we know what happens on Easter morning, they don’t yet. But, we still have the same question lingering before us, what expectations are driving our perceptions of the world, our neighbors, and even spiritual things? Our expectations are powerful things. They shape us, guide us, and inform our decisions. Are our expectations shaped by what God desires or by worldly desires? So often, worldly things contain just enough truth that we are deceived by them. Remember Peter’s confession? He was spot on but still wrong. To help Peter, Jesus tells him that in order to be saved, one must die. That is a very upside-down way of looking at things. Yet, it is precisely the truth. His expectations contained truth about the Messiah but were shaped more by the world than by God. For us, the idea of freedom is one of total independence and liberty. Jesus tells us, to be free you must surrender. What?!? The world offers us fragments of truth, but Jesus offers us the whole truth. And he helps us to walk in that truth. Yes, to be truly free means we surrender to him. And in that surrendering we are set free to live in our created purpose. In other words, when we pursue God’s glory through submission to Jesus, we find our greatest good. But, as works in progress we continually need to be reminded that, **what I think will save me... may not.**

GETTING STARTED – As a group, take time to answer this question. What was a decision in your life that was influenced by misplaced or immature expectations? Maybe it was your first car or a relationship? It could have been something that is funny now, looking back on it, or something that has had a serious impact on your life.

IN THE WORD – Let's dig back into the passage(s). It is important to strengthen our muscles in reading God's Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God's Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage aloud to the group. Then, follow the simple method below. (O.P.A)

Observe: Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

Principles: From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

Apply: Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God's Word. Remember, we believe that God's Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live Monday- Friday. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

Note: Another way to approach your time together is to talk through the following questions.

1. What are some of the basic expectations of your personal life? How do they influence decisions and perspectives?
2. What are some of your basic expectations of others? How do they impact your relationships?
3. If you had to summarize Peter's expectations of Jesus as the Messiah, what would they be?
4. How do you see yourself in Peter's shoes? How have you grown in your understanding of God and his expectations for your life?
5. If culture gives us fragments of truth, and Jesus gives us the whole truth, consider a cultural idea that you disagree with and find the fragment of truth in it. Now, try it for an idea that you agree with. Can you discern between the fragment of truth and that of worldly perspective?