

LENT 2

YEAR B

GENESIS 17:1-7, 15-16

ROMANS 4:13-25

MARK 8:31-38

FEBRUARY 24, 25, 2018

Jesus and his disciples were in the Camp David of the Roman Empire. Caesarea Philippi may have been one of the retreat places for the Roman Emperor. There would have been shrines or temples to the god worshipped by the Romans. As they were walking through Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked about what others were saying about him. He asked who others said Jesus is. When Peter made his proclamation that Jesus is the Christ, Peter was also proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God. Peter had given the right answer but did not understand the significance of his proclamation. Peter did not understand what it meant for Jesus to be the Son of God and the Messiah. Our Lord was about to teach them the meaning of being Messiah. The disciples would have a difficult time grasping the teaching.

Mark 8:31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

The words of our Lord were not pleasant words to hear. They were words that must have been foreign to them. Peter and the disciples probably grew up with the teaching that the Messiah will restore Israel to its former prominence and to its rightful place in the world. Messiah was to drive out the Romans or any foreign rulers with a force beyond any other power experienced in the world. Messiah was to make everything right. The twelve had seen many wonderful and miraculous things. People were healed, demons were sent out and the blind were receiving their sight. This is what the Messiah was supposed to do. Everything was supposed to be good. The miraculous signs of Jesus were only part of what the

Messiah was to accomplish. In the thoughts of the disciples and many others, death was not supposed to be part of the story.

This story from Mark 8 might also cause us to wonder about our thoughts concerning discipleship and our Christian walk. We might wonder about what we are called to do in the body of Christ. We read verses of scripture like these and we don't like them. We don't like challenges of life that come with following Jesus as Lord. We like Christmas and Easter because they show us the bright side. They show us the victory of our God. We get to sing Christmas carols that tell of peace on earth and good will toward those God favors and we sing, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today, Alleluia." It feels good to know that God is victorious and that we are part of the victory. These verses from Mark 8 are also part of the victory story but they remind us of our Lord's walk but also our walk with the Lord.

Mark 8:33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

What does it mean to rebuke someone? How can Peter rebuke Jesus? To rebuke someone means to express criticism or reprimand to another person because of words or actions. Jesus began teaching the disciples that he was going to be handed over to the religious authorities and finally be crucified. Jesus also told about the resurrection. Peter rebuked Jesus telling him he was wrong and that this could not happen. Peter also said this should not happen. Peter likely had the thought about Jesus being Messiah and his death on the cross was not part of the plan. It is also probable that Peter loved Jesus and did not want this to happen. He did not want Jesus to face suffering and death.

Jesus declared that Peter was setting his mind on human things instead of divine things. What are the things of God? How can we know God's will? How can we avoid getting in the way of God's plan? These are difficult questions but questions we need to have answered. We begin by getting into the Bible. We cannot know God's will apart from the scriptures. If we will not read and study the word of God we cannot know what God wants. We cannot know the mind of God or the mind of Christ unless we immerse ourselves in the Bible. God is revealed to us in the words of the Bible. Some say that the Bible is boring. It is only boring when we take God out of it. When you read the word of God remember this is the word of God and you will find new meaning. You will know that God is speaking to you and directing you. If you read the Bible as a history book or like you read any other book you will eventually lose interest and stop reading. The Bible is God's revelation to you and God's direction for your life. There are amazing things and wonderful teachings in the Bible.

Peter was in the way of God's will because he thought he knew better than Jesus. Peter perhaps forgot whom he was talking to. It was Jesus. It was Jesus his master, rabbi and teacher. Peter was talking to the Lord of heaven and earth. One of the divine things Peter was avoiding was the salvation of the world. Even if he did not know it, Peter was becoming a stumbling block to the salvation of the world. If Jesus does not go up to Jerusalem and the cross there can be no salvation. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. If Jesus is not that lamb slaughtered for our sins there can be no forgiveness of sins. If there is no forgiveness of sins and no atonement we are dead in our sins and we are left to suffer the consequences for our sins. Peter loved his Lord. Peter was doing what you and I would have done. He was seeking to protect Jesus. It could also be that Peter did not want Jesus to die because he could not think of life without Jesus.

Mark 8:34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Jesus continues to teach his disciples and us. We began this reading with the words, "Jesus began to teach." Our Lord does teach and he continues to teach. In 8:34 Jesus teaches everyone. It is a tough message. It is a difficult teaching for us to hear, but we must listen to every word from the mouth of our Lord. To lose one's life is to lose one's whole way of thinking about the ways of the world. It means to revalue the whole experience we know as life. Our ways to thinking about life and what is important and what is valuable may lead to spiritual blindness. Our Lord provides us with eyes to see the truth so that our blindness might be healed. We see so that we know the life that God gives us in God's life and God's gift. AMEN