

Christ Died for the Ungodly

Second Sunday in Lent [b]

February 25, 2018

Mark 8:27-38

²⁷ **And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”** ²⁸ **And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.”** ²⁹ **And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.”** ³⁰ **And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.** ³¹ **And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.** ³² **And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.** ³³ **But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”** ³⁴ **And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.** ³⁵ **For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.** ³⁶ **For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?** ³⁷ **For what can a man give in return for his soul?** ³⁸ **For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”**

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

On behalf of the group of the twelve Apostles, Peter answers the right question, and he answers rightly. Mark 8:29:

²⁹ **And [Jesus] asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.”**

This is the right question for every sinner. *Who do you say Jesus is?*

For in being the Christ, Jesus is the one anointed to take away the sin of the world. That’s what the word *Christ* means. It’s a Greek word meaning to anoint or christen a person for an office. Kings were anointed or christened. Upon being publicly anointed, they now serve in the office of king.

That Jesus is the Christ means he was publicly anointed for an office. And that has everything to do with you and me. For the office he was anointed for, is the office to save us from our sin. That's when the prophet John the Baptist anointed him in the Jordan river by baptizing him in front of all the sinners. From then on, Jesus is the Christ, the one anointed to take away the sin of the world.

So the answer to the question, *Who do you say Jesus is?*, has everything to do with you and me.

If we get that question wrong, we have a false Christ, and that will do us no good.

If we get that question right, we have the true Christ, and we now know our Savior.

Peter shows us how to get the question right, and then he shows us how to get the question wrong.

First, he gets it right. Jesus said, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Peter said, *"You are the Christ."* That's the right answer. Jesus is the Christ.

But then Jesus fills that in, explaining what it means that he is the Christ:

³¹ And [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he said this plainly.

That's when Peter gets it wrong, Mar 8:32:

And Peter took [Jesus] aside and began to rebuke him.

Now we may not know what kind of Christ it was that Peter wanted. Perhaps he wanted a Christ who was anointed to be a king who would give Jerusalem military deliverance from Rome. Or perhaps he wanted a Christ who would strengthen the economy and build good trade routes. Or perhaps he wanted a Christ who would be a better teacher of the law than the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, and would show people how to live better lives. Or perhaps he wanted a Christ who could run the Temple

with great efficiency.

We may not know just what kind of Christ it is that Peter would've wanted, maybe it would have been a combination of all those. But we know what kind of Christ it was that Peter did *not* want. Peter did not want the Christ who would suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and would be killed, and then three days later would rise from the dead.

Peter wanted none of that Christ. That Christ will never be attractive to our world.

But that's the only Christ for the sinner. All the other Christ's are for the person who's looking not for deliverance from sin, but for ways to make himself stronger, to improve himself, that is, justify himself before God, or to improve society.

Jesus didn't come for that. He came to suffer. He came in weakness. He came to be killed. That is the only Christ we are to know.

The false Christs are still preached. Because, that is what our sinful flesh wants—it is attractive to our world.

Our sinful flesh wants a way to make itself stronger, to improve itself, in the end, to justify itself. That's the essence of our sin, the arrogance of thinking we can present ourselves to God not as sinner, but as those who have justified self.

So, because we are still in our sinful flesh, a false Christ will sound attractive. So, the false Christs are still preached.

In our world, we can hear Christ preached as one who will improve your life, or who will change you. Or we can hear Christ preached as if he's a power source, as if being connected to Christ gives you power for living. Or, we will hear Christ preached as one who will help society, as one who helps build a strong nation, as one who makes things in this world work better and more efficiently.

But the only true Christ is he who comes in weakness: ***And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.***

In his suffering and his death on the cross, he has justified us before his Father. We have peace with God through him.

By faith in him, in his suffering and cross, in his justification of the sinner, we have obtained access to the grace in which we stand.

So now we rejoice also in our own sufferings.

For while the world would demand strength and success as a sign of blessing from God, and would demand a victorious life as evidence of faith, as those who belong to Christ, we rejoice not in that, but in our sufferings.

For we belong to him who justified the sinner by *his* suffering. And he has bound himself to us in Baptism, so that he is with us in our suffering.

For while we were still weak—not when we were improving ourselves, not when we were changing our lives, not when we were showing any evidence of strength, but while we were still weak—Christ died for the ungodly. [Romans 5:6]

He died for us.

That is the only Christ we know. The one who suffered many things, was rejected by men, was crucified and was raised up for the dead—that is the only Christ we know.

For God has shown his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [Romans 5:8]

We are justified, therefore, by his blood. Romans 5:11:

We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received reconciliation.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.