

Closing Prayer

Almighty God,
by the prayer and discipline of Lent
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,
and by following in his Way
come to share in his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Common Worship · Additional Collects · Lent 2

Lectionary-based Catechesis • Year B

The Second Sunday of Lent

Principal Service readings

Genesis 17.1-7,15-16	God grants a covenant to Abram
Psalms 22.23-31	Those who seek the Lord will praise him
Romans 4.13-25	Abraham's faith is a model of Christian faith
Mark 8.31-38	Jesus tells of suffering, for himself and his followers

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

First prophecy of the Passion

³¹Jesus began to teach his disciples 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. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But 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.'

The condition for following Christ

³⁴He 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. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Mark 8.31-38 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

Jesus' question to his disciples, 'Who do you say that I am?' (8.29) is the central theme of the gospel. Peter's use of the word '*Christos*' (8.29) is the first since Mark 1.1. In response to Peter's confession that he is the Messiah (8.29), Jesus now starts to explain the nature of his messiahship, and what it means for his followers.

8.31-35 is the first of three prophecies of the Passion, which the disciples fail to understand. After each of them Jesus says that his disciples must share his suffering (see 9.35; 10.35-40). An obvious question about these predictions of the Passion is whether the historical Jesus really spoke in such detail about what was to happen to him when he got to Jerusalem. The language of the texts seems to be influenced by the events described in Mark 14-16. Nevertheless, given the political situation in Palestine at the time, it is likely that Jesus recognised that his words and actions might get him into trouble with the Roman authorities.

Perhaps a more troubling question, though, is: Why didn't the disciples realise what Jesus was talking about? According to Mark 8.31 (and 9.31 and 10.33-34) Jesus was clear about what would happen to him in Jerusalem. But immediately after each prediction Jesus is misunderstood: by Peter (8.32-33), by the whole group (9.32-34) and by James and John (10.35-37). At this point in the gospel the disciples have become examples to be avoided.

Peter's failure to accept the mystery of the cross is corrected and balanced by positive teachings (8.34-38): the challenge of following Jesus even to the cross (8.34), losing and gaining one's life (8.35), the extraordinary value of a person's psyche (8.36-37), and not being ashamed of the Son of Man (8.38), Mark has brought all these sayings together on the theme of discipleship. In form, the instructions are very like Jewish wisdom books (Proverbs, Wisdom ...). The inclusion of a final saying about the Son of Man and the last judgement (8.38) has the effect of giving the collection a christological and eschatological dimension. The sayings would have been both challenging and comforting to Mark's readers, as they seemed to be facing persecution.

Quotations

1

Mark 8:27-38 is a rich resource for those who seek to make Mark's gospel come alive in the lives of Christians today. It sets before us the basic question of Mark's Gospel and indeed of the entire NT: Who do you say that I am? It confronts us with the mystery of the cross and challenges us to integrate the reality of Jesus' suffering (and our own) into our deeper understanding of Jesus and discipleship. And it spells out the demands, value, and rewards of faithful following of Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark / John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington. 2002

2

When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to his person. The grace of his call bursts all the bonds of legalism. It is a gracious call, a gracious commandment. It transcends the difference between the law and the gospel. Christ calls, the disciple follows; that is grace and commandment in one.

The cost of discipleship / Dietrich Bonhoeffer. [1937]

3

Taking up my 'cross' means a life voluntarily surrendered to God.

Arthur Walkington Pink, 1886-1952

4

Love was compressed for all history in that lonely figure on the cross, who said that he could call down angels at any moment on a rescue mission, but chose not to - because of us. At Calvary, God accepted his own unbreakable terms of justice.

Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893

Related topics

For further study:

Doctrine of the cross; discipleship; prophecy; end times