

Mark 8:31-38

March 12, 2006 – 2nd SUNDAY IN LENT

Ashamed of Jesus?

† **Not with His thoughts in mind** (vv.31-33)

† **Not with His cross to follow** (vv.34-38)

In the name of Jesus, our suffering Savior and Friend, dearly redeemed believers:

What's wrong with success? One of the major problems non-Christians have with our belief in Jesus as the Christ of God is this whole idea that success in the eyes of the world is failure in heaven – and visa versa. And don't think this is an unconscious problem. One Jewish rabbi on the radio said it rather bluntly: "We don't need a Messiah who dies on a cross!"

Do we? Anyone who follows Jesus as the Christ, the anointed Messiah from God through the Jewish people, understands at least in theory that there is a price to pay for our faith. Peter and the rest of the disciples were willing to pay the price, but only as long as they could immediately set the record straight. Remember how the "sons of thunder," James and John, wanted to call down fire on that Samaritan village for not welcoming Jesus because He was on His way to Jerusalem? Now Peter has just confessed his faith in Jesus as "*the Christ*." (Mark 8:29) How can it be that only a few verses later Mark records Jesus scolding Peter with, "*Get behind me, Satan!*"? Could it be that we too have some soul searching to do? Must I really ask myself this painful question, "Am I **Ashamed of Jesus?**"

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"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this...." Jesus, the Master Teacher, has wisely waited to tell His disciples. They do not want to think Jesus is losing popularity after feeding of the 5,000. Somehow it had not clicked that Jesus made them get into the boat that day and cross back to Capernaum to keep the crowds from forcing Him to be their Bread King. His retirement to the north into Tyre and Sidon, back around to the Decapolis southeast of Galilee, north across the sea to Bethsaida and now all the way to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, not far from the base of Mount Hermon – Jesus' closest disciples did not understand why He was escaping the crowds. Time and again Mark records Jesus commanding people not to tell how He had healed them. Jesus knew that His Jewish people had a different agenda for His ministry. They were fooled by the rabbinic conclusion that there must be two Messiahs. They only wanted the one who would conquer, not the one who would suffer. The demanded Christ without the cross.

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16:22 NIV) Peter, don't you realize what you're saying? Since you claim you would die rather than deny our Lord, maybe you don't see the need for a Savior who dies on a cross either. But we know the rest of the story. We know your ugly denials and your bitter tears.

Did you hear that? Without warning something inside is echoing Peter. Without realizing it we assume Peter could be so stupid, so unfaithful, but not we. So why has it so often happened on my drive home from a triumphant Easter service that I lose my joy when I see so many cars pouring out of church parking lots where Christ is not proclaimed as crucified and risen? Why is there a creeping envy when we hear about the success of fellow WELS members who are faithfully proclaiming God's Word in its truth and purity? Where does this self-pity come from when my plans don't succeed as quickly or impressively as I would like? Jesus tells us the source of this sickness. And it's not pretty.

Jesus could see it infecting all His followers. *When Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the*

things of men.” Not wanting Jesus to suffer and die is what the devil desires. Such thoughts come straight from hell. And if the Lord Jesus calls His lead disciple, “*Satan*,” what is He saying to me? Do I not have Christ’s **thoughts in mind**? Am I **Ashamed of Jesus**?

‡ **Not with His cross to follow (vv.34-38)**

So far we have not put our finger on the sin of Peter. We obviously need to know what is so Satanic about us that gives us the uncomfortable feeling that Jesus is condemning our sin too. Jesus did not let Peter’s private objection stay a little secret between the two of them. Jesus did not even limit His response to the Twelve. *He called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”* We can see our sin, then we can confess it. The fact is that along with Peter, we prefer the *theology of glory* instead of the *theology of the cross*. We don’t want Jesus to be treated shamefully because we don’t want suffering for ourselves. Ultimately what’s coming through is our own sinful attitude toward self-glory. We want the crown, but not the cross. We want the glory, but not the shame. We want the victory of Easter, without the agony of Good Friday. We don’t want to be ashamed the way Jesus suffered our shame on the cross.

So narrow minded and earthbound these sinful natures are! So fixated on popularity and Hollywood glamour! Even if we don’t want the limelight because we’re shy, we certainly don’t want people to single us out as “bad people” or “intolerant” or “right-wing religious fanatics.” We want to be the reasonable ones that have the respect of everyone around us. We want to enjoy life and all it has to offer. But Jesus warns again, beating back these humanistic ideas like firemen quenching flare-ups: *“Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”* Jesus is literally saying that if we are all wrapped up earthly success and pleasure, we are losing our “*soul*.” And Jesus’ question cuts through the clamor of our own conceit: *“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

If you achieve ultimate glory on earth in fame, wealth and pleasure, what of that can buy back your eternal “*soul*” from the jaws of death and the shame of hell? If we choose Satan’s way of self-glory, if we reject Christ’s suffering here on earth, just listen to Jesus’ warning that cuts across eternity: *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

There’s something terribly wrong inside my soul when I have to hang on to a chair in front of me to make a public statement about my faith. When my knees are knocking and my breath comes up short because of the possibility of public ridicule, I who have shed no blood for the cause of Christ quite naturally follow Peter’s attitude **Ashamed of Jesus**. That is why I thank God for sending His Son to call Peter and me back from the depths of Satanic hell. That old enemy is sealed in damnation. Satan has no opportunity to repent, and he knows it. But God calls me and Peter, “*Satan*,” to help us see this sin of self-glory and turn away from it while there still is time. He wants us all to see all our sins washed away with His blood shed so willingly and lovingly on the shameful cross that should have been ours.

Am I **Ashamed of Jesus**? By nature, yes. But “when I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride.” (CW 125:1) Thank God that Jesus did not listen to Peter and that from the depths of my *theology of glory* Jesus rescues me by the *theology of the cross*. Future glory is yet to come because Christ suffered the shame of the cross and beat back the power of death itself by His glorious resurrection. But for now, thanks to the Spirit of adoption in our Baptism, *“We are heirs...of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”* (Romans 8:17 NIV) Daily Jesus makes me different as I drown that sinful nature of mine by contrition and repentance. **Ashamed of Jesus? Not with His thoughts in mind, Not with His cross to follow.** Thank-you, Jesus, my Savior, the Christ of God – suffering once, glorious now and forever. Amen.