

Lent 2
March 1, 2015

"Not Ashamed of the Cross"

MARK 8:31-38

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. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But 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." ³⁴ Then 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. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ 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."

A family was walking along the beach on a beautiful summer day. They were running into the waves, laughing and having lots of fun. However, one of the family members, their teenage daughter, was not walking with them. She was by herself about two hundred feet behind them. I wonder why? I think you know the reason. She did not want to be seen with her family, her squirrely brothers, her dad with the white legs and her mom with the outdated bathing suit.

Here we are this morning walking with Jesus down the road of life. We are not ashamed to be seen following him closely. With the Apostle Paul we confess "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." We are not ashamed to look up at a cross and say, "This cross reminds me of how my Savior gave his life for me to pay for all my sins." Let's use these words of Jesus to help us appreciate even more that we are not ashamed of the cross.

Jesus was not ashamed of the cross

Jesus was not ashamed to go to the cross for us. He made this clear to his disciples as it says, "He 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."

Notice how Jesus calls himself the Son of Man. The mighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords became the Son of Man. He needed food and water to stay alive. He needed a place to sleep at night. He even allowed himself to be tempted as we are, yet he was without sin. Jesus was never ashamed of his parents like the girl walking down the beach. As the Son of Man he never failed to love his parents and respect them and honor them perfectly.

Years go by and still we think of times we hurt our parents or did not respect them as we should. Jesus became the Son of Man to rescue us from those sins against our parents and all the sins of our past, present and future by the perfect life he lived for us and the perfect death he died on the cross.

Jesus told his disciples about suffering many things and being rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law. How often Jesus had to endure rejection. When he spent time with sinners to bring them to repentance they accused him of being a drunkard and glutton. When he went to the home of a man named Zacchaeus they grumbled and complained because he went to be the guest of a man who was a sinner. Oh, how Jesus suffered when the leaders of the Jewish people slapped him, hit him with their fists, spit on him and mocked him for saying he was their Lord and God. Jesus loved people. He spent long nights in prayer to his heavenly Father seeking strength and help to handle these rejections. I struggle when people reject the message of the gospel I am trying bring them. I cannot imagine how hard that must have been for Jesus.

Jesus was not ashamed of going through these rejections and even going to the cross. He told this disciples that he was going to be killed. In Mark 10 Jesus gives even more details about how he would be put to death. He spoke about being handed over to the Gentiles. The disciples knew how the Gentiles or Romans put people to death. They knew about the Place of the Skull outside of the city gates of Jerusalem. As civilized as the Romans were, they executed their criminals by crucifixion.

Jesus was not ashamed to give up his life on this terrible instrument of torture called the cross, because he knew this would fulfill the predictions made in Isaiah 53 and in Psalm 22. Jesus was not ashamed of the cross because the prophet Isaiah had predicted he would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. Jesus was not ashamed of the cross because he already had spoken through David in Psalm 22 of the suffering he would endure with such words as "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint... My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth." Jesus was not ashamed because all the lambs and bulls and goats that were sacrificed in the Old Testament pointed to him as the Lord of God who would take away the sin of the world. Jesus was not ashamed of the cross because he knew he would rise again on the third day.

Peter does not do very well when he hears Jesus speaking with such boldness about going to the cross. "He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him." Jesus spoke plainly or boldly. See the face of Jesus. There was determination, eagerness, and even a joy on Jesus' face as he talked about the cross. The book of Hebrews says of Jesus, "For the joy set before him he endured the cross and the shame." Jesus is so eager to carry out the will of his heavenly Father. He is so eager to fulfill his job as the Christ, the Messiah, who would give his life for us.

Notice what Jesus says to Peter. "But 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.'" Peter was ashamed of the cross. Peter wanted to see a kingdom of glory here on this earth. Jesus wants a kingdom built on his cross. Satan will even use Peter's words to discourage Jesus and keep him from going forward. Jesus was not ashamed of the cross. We are not ashamed of the cross. We don't want Satan to

discourage us so we listen now to what Jesus says about carrying the cross for him.

We are not ashamed of the cross

"Then he called the crowd to him along with the disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Jesus speaks to the disciples and to the crowd and to you and me this morning. He tells us he wants us to carry the cross for him. This involves denying myself. It means going against what my sinful nature tells me to when it come to the most important issue of life and that is my salvation. It means believing everything, absolutely everything, was done for me when Jesus cried out, "It is finished!"

In 2 Corinthians chapter four the Apostle Paul tells us what a privilege it is to hold up the cross of Jesus to our dying world. "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus might also be revealed in our bodies." Whether or not you wear a cross, you are carrying the cross of Jesus with you wherever you go. Also in 2 Corinthians two Paul writes, "But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him." If people get close to you there will notice a certain fragrance or odor. Coming through your pores and coming through your words and actions is the death of Jesus. Some people come to love what they see in you and others will always hate it and despise it the same way they hated Jesus. I deny myself when I confess nothing in all the world is more important than the cross on which Jesus died, important for me and important for every person that crosses the path of my life.

Jesus explains so clearly how important it is for him to go to the cross for us and for us to carry the cross for him. "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul? Or, what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" If you gather all the money in the world and put it in to your account, every dollar, every Euro, every yen, every other currency it would not be sufficient to pay for one sin. As Martin Luther said in his catechism, "Christ has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from sin, death and the power of the devil, not with gold and silver, but with his holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death." All our deeds of love and kindness put together from one lifetime cannot remove one little bad thought we had ten years ago. The only thing I can give an exchange for my soul is what Jesus has given me at the cross.

This past week I had the opportunity to remind someone who is going through lots of pain and suffering that she is so rich in Christ and what he has done for her at the cross. I don't know why some Christians have to suffer more than others. All I do know is that in Christ we equally share what he did for us at the cross when he said "It is finished." God has chosen to you and me to remind each other of these blessings and to bring them to people who do not want to hear about them.

I don't want to be ashamed of the cross. I don't want to deny Jesus when I have an opportunity to talk about him, even to those who want nothing to do with him. Jesus tells me, "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." I know if I were in a Muslim country and terrorists threatened to end my life unless I deny Jesus and shout instead that Allah is great, I would shout out as

loud as I could that Jesus is my Lord and Savior. They can sever my head from my body but they cannot sever me from the love of Jesus my Savior. At the same time I don't want to miss the wonderful opportunities to confess the name of Jesus right here and now. I never want to become so ashamed of Jesus that someday he be ashamed of me when he comes with all his holy angels.

Dear Christians, as Jesus tells us, this is an adulterous and corrupt generation. People desperately need what Jesus did on the cross to save them and rescue. He has left us here on this earth to boldly confess what he has done for us. He promises to give us his Holy Spirit to speak the right words. Another week lies before us to walk closely with Jesus. It is another week to live on this earth not ashamed for what he accomplished for us at the cross. What an honor he has given us. Amen.