

**Pentecost 17**  
**September 20, 2015**

*"The Cross Bearing Christ and the Cross Bearing Christian"*

**MARK 8:27-35**

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**J**esus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"<sup>28</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."<sup>29</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ."<sup>30</sup> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.<sup>33</sup> 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."<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

It is hard to think of Jesus turning to Peter and calling him Satan. Yet that is what Jesus did. Peter loved Jesus. Peter confessed him to be the Christ. Peter believed with all his heart that Jesus was his Lord and God. But Peter did not want Jesus to go to the cross and die for us. His love for Jesus prompted him to plead with Jesus not to go up to Jerusalem and suffer for the sins of the world. That is why Jesus called him "Satan."

I pray that our congregation never shies away from speaking about Jesus and his death on the cross for our sins. That is the heart and core of the gospel message. A few weeks ago a very nice lady from KSBY stopped by to discuss the possibility of running some ads on television to promote our congregation in the community. She asked us what made our congregation distinctive. I know what she was looking for. She was looking for something distinctive to use in a potential advertising campaign.

What is the heart and core and foundation of who we are? It is not the people of this congregation. It is Christ Jesus our Lord and his suffering on the cross for our sin. As Paul said the people of Corinth, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

The words of Jesus before us this morning take us to the heart and core of who we are. Let's take a closer look at these words under theme, "**The Cross Bearing Christ and the Cross Bearing Christian.**"

**The Cross Bearing Christ**

"Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked, 'Who do people say I am?'" Why did Jesus walk through the towns and villages with his disciples? He wanted to draw people close to himself. He wanted them to see that he was their Lord and God. That is why he performed miracles. Mostly he wanted them to see him as the Shepherd who

would give his life to rescue the sheep who were lost. He wanted them to see him as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

Jesus asks his disciples their opinion on what people were saying about him? Did people see him as the Lamb of God who would take away their sin? Did they see him as someone who would go to the cross for him?

The disciples knew what people were saying about Jesus. Some thought he was John the Baptist who had come back from the dead. Others thought he was the prophet Elijah or one of the other prophets who had come back from the dead. They saw the miracles Jesus did. They heard his preaching and teaching. He sure reminded them of one of the great prophets such as Elijah. What the disciples did not hear were confessions that Jesus was Lord and God, or that Jesus was the Savior who would give his life for them. It seems like Isaiah's words about the Messiah being wounded for our transgression and bruised for our iniquities are totally ignored.

In his book "Born Again" Charles Colson writes about his previous beliefs before becoming a Christian. He wrote, "I'd been content to think of Christ as an inspired prophet and teacher who walked the sands of the Holy Land 2000 years ago- several cuts above the rest of the men of His time, or for that matter anytime." Then he began to read through the New Testament and take notes of the places where it speaks of Jesus as a man, but also the places it speaks of Jesus as our Lord and God and Savior. Through that process he became a believer.

Jesus asks his disciples what they believed about him. Peter has no problem being the first to give an answer to his all important question. "You are the Christ." Matthew's account includes these words, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God." Jesus changed Peter's name from Simon to Peter. Peter means "rock." It was on such rock solid confessions of faith that Jesus would build his church. Jesus warned them not to tell anyone because he wanted the people to not only believe in him as their Lord and God but also believe and trust his death on the cross for their forgiveness.

You can see how much the disciples need to learn about the cross by what happens next. "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." It says he spoke plainly about this. Jesus did not make veiled references to his suffering on the cross for the sin of the world. He spoke plainly about it. He told them he must be killed.

The cross was not an option. It was the only way sin could be forgiven. I only have to look back at my life this past week to see so many places where I have fallen short of God's glory. I see nothing in me that can atone for my sin. My only hope is that out of necessity my God will provide a way for my sin to be forgiven. The same is true also for you. That happened at the cross.

We are so thankful that God's Word speaks to us so plainly and clearly about Jesus going to the cross for our forgiveness. We think of the clear words in Isaiah predicting the suffering Jesus would go through for us. "Surely, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted." Yes, Jesus was punished by his heavenly Father not for sins he committed but for our sins. We are thankful for the clear words recorded for us in the writings of the Apostle Paul. "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight."

These plain and easily understood words from Isaiah and from Jesus and from the Apostle Paul profoundly affect our lives. Let me give you a personal example so that you might think of your

own personal faith in what happened at the cross. This past week I picked up a very hot cover for a heavy cast iron pot. I thought it had cooled off. It put too large blisters on my two fingers. I was driving back to the office here at church thinking of how much my fingers hurt from the burns. Then I thought of how so many people are suffering so much more pain than I am experiencing. I thought of how much Jesus suffered at the cross for my sin. How often hasn't the Holy Spirit lifted your eyes to see you cross bearing Savior? Your forgiveness and your peace with God are real because of the cross.

What comes next truly shocks us. Peter did not want Jesus to go to the cross when he heard Jesus speak plainly. What did Peter do? It says that he rebuked Jesus. The word used here for "rebuke" is a strong word. Think of a mother sternly rebuking her child who was about to run across the street without looking both ways. Peter loved Jesus so much. He does not want him to suffer.

It says that Jesus turned and looked at his disciples. In front of his disciples he rebuked Peter with the strong words, "Get behind me Satan." Peter had it all wrong. Jesus tells him, "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Everything inside of Peter, all of his emotions and love for Jesus, cried out from within him and led him to demand that Jesus not go to the cross. Satan would have loved to have Jesus listen to Peter.

The ways of the human heart are so different from the ways of God that involve a cross. Jeremiah 17:6 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" The human heart has a natural dislike and disdain for the cross. Paul said the cross was foolishness for the Greeks and a stumbling block for the Jews.

How do we bring people into the kingdom of God? Or to look more closely at a proposal given to us by the nice lady from KSBY television. "How to increase the amount of congregants at Star of Bethlehem Lutheran Church."

Modern marketing says we need to find a niche that appeals to people. If we present a message that only emphasizes how Christ can change your life it will appeal to people. People want a Jesus who can change their lives and make them better people. They are no different than those who chased after people cause of his miracles. The only way to bring people to know how their sins are forgiven and how they have peace with God is to do what Jesus did when he spoke plainly about the cross. That's the message we need to hear for ourselves and the message we need to bring to others.

## **The Cross Bearing Christian**

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." The word here used for deny is a strong word. It is the same word used to describe how Peter denied Jesus. Remember the words from the fight against using drugs: "Just say no!" When we follow Jesus and look up to his cross for our salvation instead of to ourselves we say no to any thoughts inside of us that would take us down a path of thinking we can add something to what Christ has done to save us.

Yes, because the cross means so much to you, you will even lose things in your life and give up things if necessary to keep the cross of Christ. If your love for material possessions becomes so strong it is taking you away from Christ, you want to get rid of these feelings. If your love for some sin is so strong it is taking you from Christ you want to get rid of it. If your heart says you are not a Christian because you have not done enough, you want to deny these thoughts and lose

them to have Christ alone.

To illustrate what Jesus is telling us here. On this warm day, you decide to go for a swim a Pismo Beach. The water is warm. The air is hot. The waves are perfect. There are thousands on the beach but no one is in the water. You know why. Not only have they seen a shark, but you can see with your own eyes several sharks swimming right off the beach. So what do you do? You give up swimming to avoid losing your life to the jaws of a great white shark. So we say "no" to anything that would take our eyes off the cross, even if that means people think we are fools for what we believe. So we sing, "Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim, Till all the world adore his sacred name." Amen.