

2 S. in Lent 2/28/21  
Mark 8:27-38 B

**“IF ANYONE WOULD COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW ME.”**

“If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me,” Jesus says. Easier said than done.

Easier said than done for Peter and the boys in the band. They had just heard the words of Jesus:

“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.

And the Evangelist adds this, “He said this **plainly**” (vv. 31-32).

Jesus, with His own words, makes it very clear -- He had to go to Jerusalem, to suffer and die. If we poor sinners were to be saved from sin, death, and eternal hell, Jesus had to go to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and rise again. But, the disciples could not believe Jesus’ words.

Peter, in the foolishness of human reason, did not want to hear anything about suffering and dying. The Evangelist Mark tells us that he “took [Jesus] aside and began to ‘correct’ Him” (v. 32). I know, I know – your English translation says “Peter rebuked Jesus,” but the word means “corrected”. So, let me ask you: when do you “correct” someone? When they’ve made a mistake, right? When Jesus talked of His suffering and death, Peter thought that Jesus was wrong, that He had made a mistake, so he tried to “correct” Jesus.

Peter still had in mind the things of men, his own ideas and wants, rather than the things of God. God's plan was to save us from sin, death, and hell. Peter and the disciples were still blinded by the idea that the Messiah would be an earthly king, that He would drive the hated Romans

out and bring victory, glory, and wealth to His people. Peter did not want a Messiah who would suffer and die.

Peter wanted glory and he thought Jesus had come to give him glory here and now, today. He did not want to hear and suffering, rejection, and death. What about you? Do you follow in the footsteps of Peter and the disciples?

The disciples wanted thrones and crowns, but Jesus promised them thorns and a cross. Honestly, in the weakness of our flesh, we are just like them -- we love ease, we want fame and fortune, power and popularity. We want nothing to do with the cross and suffering.

We do not hesitate to wear the cross; it's a nice fashion statement. But, bearing the cross – nope! That means God isn't doing things **my** ways. Come on, you know how it is right? Rub the magic lamp and my Jesus is supposed to appear, to take the illness and infirmity from my body; make my spouse nice (which means they do things my way); make my children above average so the police stop calling me; give me cash money so I can buy more and more stuff; and get rid of the worry, the anxiety, the mourning and the sadness.

In the foolishness of our human reason, we look only to ourselves and our wants. Like Peter, we put the things of men -- our wants, our wishes, our will -- before the things of God.

This Sunday in the season of Lent teaches us that Jesus is not a magic genie to grant our every wish, He is the Savior of the world.

II. In our Epistle, Paul writes these words: "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinner, Christ died for us" (v. 8).

Our sin deserved only God's temporal and eternal wrath. But, the will of God, the things of God, is that His Son receive His wrath for your sin.

Christ suffered for you, in your place -- the scourging; carrying the heavy cross to the place of the skull; the spikes driven into His hands and feet; the mocking and hatred of the mob; the agony of crucifixion.

The very Son of God suffered the wrath of God for the sins of the world. That's the wages of sin, suffered and endured for you, so that you would have the forgiveness of all your sins. That's the things of God.

III. Baptized into Christ and living in Christ, everything of our Master Christ is ours -- His death, resurrection, eternal life, and -- **and** -- rejection and suffering on this side of heaven. Yes, we will have glory and rest from all of our struggles in heaven. But, today, today we carry the cross.

"If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (v. 34). This is the life of the Christian and the Christian life is the life of repentance. Daily we return to the waters of our baptism to drown our flesh that loves the things of man more than the things of God, and be raised to a new life in Christ. And living that new life in Christ means that we take up on cross to follow Jesus, by believing God's Word and leading a holy life according to it

Yes, on this side of heaven, we do not wear a crown, we carry a cross. And the sinful flesh doesn't like it. And our human reason doesn't get it. Our reason wants to know: If Jesus has suffered all the pain of the cross already, then why do we still suffer? Let's address that question. Let's answer it because the father of all lies wants you to believe that you are suffering punishment for your sin. Don't listen to his lies! Jesus suffered for your sin and bore the punishment of every single sin of thought, word, and deed. No sin remains. All have been atoned for.

So why do you suffer? Because you live in a sinful world, still clothed in sinful flesh; and where there is sin, there is suffering.

And in our Epistle, Paul writes, “we rejoice in our sufferings” (v. 3). How can that be? Commercial fisherman stumbled upon an interesting discovery. They would haul their catch of fish onto their boats and store them in tanks of water. They would be at sea for many days and, in the course of those days, the water in these holding tanks would become stagnant and the fish would die. By the time they got ashore, they would not be able to sell their fish, because, by now, those dead fish tasted horrible and no one would buy them. That is, until one day, when some natural predator fish happened to be caught in the same net and placed in the same holding tanks. Much to the surprise of the fishermen, the fish were not dead in stagnant water, but alive and strong, swimming to stay away from the predators.

As those predator fish made the other fish to swim, in order to flee from them, we rejoice in our sufferings because they make us flee to God. Our sufferings remind us of the song we learned in Sunday School, “We are weak, but He is strong.” Our crosses and suffering ultimately give us hope, hope because God is with us, at work in us, and will deliver us from this great tribulation to Himself in heaven, to wipe all the tears from our eyes.

The book of Hebrews tells us about Jesus, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -- yet was without sin” (He 4). Our Lord Jesus sympathizes with us. That means He is one with us, as we are one with Him in death and in life.

On the cross, He was abandoned the Father. He was abandoned, so that you, Dear Child, would never be abandoned nor forsaken by your Father in heaven. When you bear the cross of sorrow, toil, or woe, Jesus is

with you. He feeds you with His grace in His Word and in His Body and Blood to give you strength and peace and patience for today, and points your heart to the glory of the life in heaven to come.