

Lent 2            2/25/24  
Mark 8:27-38    B

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

Jesus teaches us to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” In his Little Catechism, Martin Luther teaches us that these words mean, “God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we **believe** His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.” Easier said than done, isn’t it?

It was certainly easier said than done for Peter and the disciples. They could not believe the Word of God, even when it was spoken by Jesus Himself.

*He began to teach them that 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.*

To which the Evangelist St. Mark adds, *He said this plainly.* Jesus, with plain words, made it clear -- He had to go to Jerusalem, to die and rise again the 3<sup>rd</sup> day to save us poor sinners from sin, death, and eternal hell. 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.* I know, your English reads, “rebuked,” but the word really means “correct.” I emphasize that because when Jesus talked about His suffering and death, Peter thought Jesus had made a mistake, so he “corrected” Jesus.

Peter still did not understand that the reason Jesus came to this earth was to suffer and die for our sins. Peter still had in mind the things of men, his own ideas and wants, rather than the things of God. Peter was still

blinded by the idea that the Messiah would be an earthly king, that He would come and set up an earthly kingdom who would bring victory, glory, and wealth to His people. The Israelites had been given the land of Canaan as a free gift from God. But because they rebelled against God and would not live by His will, they lost their land.

God's plan was to save them from sin, death, and hell. The disciples' plan was that this Messiah would lead an army to drive the Romans out. This is the kind of Messiah Peter wanted. He did not want a Messiah who would suffer and die. He still did not understand that Christ had to suffer and die because of our sin.

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. Do you want glory? Do you follow in the footsteps to believe that Jesus has come to give you glory here and now, this very day, so you don't have to live with suffering, rejection, and death?

In the foolishness of our human reason, we look only to ourselves and our wants. This is where we fall into the same trap into which Peter fell. We think that Jesus is here to do our bidding, to satisfy whatever desire we may have. For Peter, that meant driving the Romans out of Palestine. What does it mean for you? Jesus is supposed to take the illness and infirmity from our body; make our spouse nice, which of course, means my spouse does things my way; make my children above average so the police stop calling; give me cash money so I can buy more and more stuff for me; and get rid of the worry, the despair, the sadness I feel.

Our sin, our disbelief and distrust of God's Word and our refusal to live a godly life, cries out that we prefer our things to the things of God. Like Peter, we put 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.

Jesus journeys to the cross to suffer God's wrath and punishment for our sins. Paul says it this way in our Epistle, *God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

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 the scourging. He carried the heavy, wooden cross to the place of the skull. He allowed the spikes to be driven into His hands and feet. He endured the agony of crucifixion, as well as the mocking and hatred of the mob.

The very Son of God suffered the wrath of God for the sins of the world. His Father abandoned Him, forsaking Him, as He hung on the cross to His very death. That's the wages of sin, suffered and endured for you. That means you are forgiven all your sin. That's the Good News of the Gospel. That's the things of God.

Baptized into Christ and living in Christ, everything of our Master's is ours -- His death, resurrection, eternal life, and -- and -- rejection and suffering on this side of heaven. Yes, we will have glory. But remember, Good Friday comes before Easter. The glory of heaven will come. But today, we carry our cross.

*"If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."* This is the life of the Christian and the Christian life is the life of repentance. Daily you return to the waters of your baptism, to drown your sinful flesh so that you can deny yourself. In other words, you confess your sins. You confess that, like Peter, you prefer the things of

man to the things of God. You prefer what **you** want to what God wants. Then you take up His cross: You trust that Christ has died for you, and that you are forgiven. You believe God's Word and lead a godly life according to it.

You bear His cross which is now yours. Yes, on this side of heaven, we do not wear a crown, we carry a cross. And in our Epistle, Paul writes, *we rejoice in our sufferings*. How can that be?

We rejoice in our sufferings because they teach us the truth of the song we learned as children in Sunday School, "We are weak, but He is strong." Our sufferings teach us that we are weak, so we flee to God. And God uses those crosses to conform us to the image of His Son.

Remember what Jesus cried in dying agony from the cross, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?*" The strongest confession of faith in all the Bible. Jesus knew that even in his dying anguish, His Father was in charge, His will was being done, so Jesus entrusted Himself completely and totally into His Father's hands. That's what we learn to do.

The book of Proverbs reads, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding (3:5)*. That's what our crosses teach us to do. We learn not to fear, love, and trust in the things of this world, especially not earthly wealth. It cannot save us. Our crosses teach us how helpless we truly are, so they teach us to trust in the Lord our God, who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all (cf Ro 8:32).

And as we bear our cross, God is at work in us, giving us patience, comfort, strength, hope. Yes, they give us hope, hope that 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.

Remember this, Dear Child of God: When Jesus bore the cross, He was abandoned the Father. He was abandoned, so that you 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 is one with you, He lives in you and you live in Him, today, and forever and ever, without end.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.