

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#17: Mark 8:27-38: Life's Most Important Question

Intro: The Biggest Stumbling Block

I. Some Have the Wrong Idea about *Identity* of Jesus (v.27-30)

A. The World Has Various Views on Jesus' Identity

- In the First Century
 - John the Baptist—he was rumored to have come alive again
 - Elijah—because Malachi predicted Elijah's return (Mal 4:5)
 - One of the prophets—because Jesus was teacher and miracle worker
- In the Present Day
 - What are some various views of Jesus' identity today?
 - ****Note:** even if Jesus' identity is clear, there can still be disagreement and confusion about Jesus!

B. Jesus Is the Only One Who Gets to Tell Us His True Identity

- Jesus is "the Christ"
 - The OT promised that God would send his anointed one (the Messiah, Greek word "Christ") who be the savior and deliverer of God's people
 - The Messiah was definitively a *human* figure descended from David
- Jesus is the "Son of God"
 - Matthew's Gospel records the fuller version of Peter's confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt 16:16)
 - Son of God is a divine figure (Mark 12:36-37)
- Jesus is the "Son of Man"
 - In v.31, Jesus identifies himself as "Son of Man"
 - This is a human/divine figure from Daniel 7:13-14:

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

C. Jesus' Identity is Only Understood with God's Help

- Peter is the one who speaks on behalf of the twelve (v.29)
- But Peter only knew this with divine help: "Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven" (Matt 16:17)
- Key lesson to learn: We are not Christians because we are smarter than other people!
 - We know Jesus only because God revealed this to us. We are saved by grace!
 - This should create personal humility, as well as patience and compassion on those who don't know Jesus

II. Some Have the Wrong Idea about the *Mission* of Jesus (v.31-33)

A. First Century Jews Had Misconceptions about the Messiah's Mission

- For many Jews, the Messiah was supposed to be a military leader who would deliver Israel from Roman occupation
- This idea is understandable because OT texts talk about the Messiah as a mighty king

B. So, Jesus Immediately Begins to Correct this Misunderstanding

- Jesus explains that his core mission is not conquer but to be conquered
 - "Son of man must suffer many things . . . and be killed" (v. 31)
 - Jesus said this "plainly" (v.32)
- It's Clear that Peter did not get it
 - He "rebuked" Jesus (v.32)!
 - Historical context: previous would-be Messiahs had been killed by the Romans which ended each prior messianic movement.

C. A Non-Suffering Messiah is Anti-Christian

- Jesus is very plain that Peter's way is not the way of God, but the way of Satan (v.33)
- Biggest temptation for Jesus is the idea that he can attain glory without suffering
 - This temptation was already given by Satan in the wilderness: "All these [kingdoms] I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me" (Matt 3:10)
 - In the Garden of Gethsemane: "Remove this cup from me" (Mark 14:36)
- Today, some want a non-suffering Christ who did not come to *intentionally die for sins*.
But we must remember the core message of Christianity is Jesus suffering in our place

III. Some Have the Wrong Idea about *Following* Jesus (v.34-38)

A. If Jesus Suffers and Denies Himself, then we must do the same

- "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (v.34)
- To mention the "cross" here is to mention the well-known form of execution and death

B. One of the biggest obstacles to following Jesus is suffering and sacrifice

- People repeatedly abandon Christianity because it's a life of suffering
 - Judas left because of the call to suffering/loss
 - **This is why the "prosperity gospel" is so damaging
- But, what if you gained the whole world? You would still lose your soul for eternity (v.35-36)
- C.S. Lewis: "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither."

Discussion Groups

1. Do you think the affluence of the American church keeps us from understanding what it means to "deny" ourselves? If so, how can this be addressed?
2. We tend to live lives of self-protection instead of sacrifice. Can you think of some ways today where you can sacrifice more for the sake of the Kingdom? If you are willing, please share that with the group.
3. Part of the reason we resist suffering is because we are only thinking about temporal rather than eternal things. What are some ways that we can put our focus on eternity?