

Rev. Beth J. Costlow

Lent 2 Year B

Mark 8:31-38

February 28, 2021

Prepared for: Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville SC

- Before jumping into this week’s text, we need to recognize that it begins in the middle of a conversation...
 - It all starts with Jesus asking, “Who do people say that I am?”
 - Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah, and there are even some who say you’re one of the prophets.
 - And then, “Who do *you* say that I am?”
 - Peter jumps quickly with the response: You are the Messiah!
 - Only to be shushed by Jesus!
- So let’s talk about what that meant.
 - Messiah translates as “anointed king” or “chosen one”
 - specifically one from David’s lineage, who could take down the first century equivalent to Goliath, as David did in his youth.
 - Political leader
 - Who would claim and win—by whatever means necessary—everything God had promised to Israel, as David did in every battle described in OT
 - Schooled in—and obedient to—God’s Law, as “David did that which was right in the eyes of God.”
- Peter, a faithful Israelite and Judean, expects Jesus to fulfill all of these roles—and rightfully so!
- And then today’s lesson, when Jesus begins to teach the disciples about what’s coming
 - The Messiah, Jesus says, must undergo great suffering, rejection, and even murder.
 - If we hear that in the context of Jesus’ affirmation of himself as the Messiah, Peter’s response might be more understandable.
 - This bears no resemblance to the Messiah that Israelites and Judeans expect.
- Jesus’ prediction for himself turns Peter’s—and all the other disciples—indeed, even the world’s—expectations upside-down.

- Peter shouldn't be completely surprised here. After all, Jesus has already proven that he is not the obedient Messiah that was expected, when he healed a man's "withered hand" on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6)
- He has also already been rejected by his own friends and neighbors in Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6)
- Still, Peter is not prepared to hear that the Messiah will be murdered—hung on a cross and left to die.
 - Maybe we aren't prepared acknowledge that either.
 - But it's what happened.
 - And, Jesus says, his followers have to be prepared for the same to happen to us.
- But it's not really about death. It's about life.
 - Losing one's life for others, Jesus says, is to give others life.
 - Jesus demonstrates God's reign—God's kingship—by dying, but not staying dead.
 - Jesus defeats the political powers-that-be by dying—but not staying dead.
 - Jesus demonstrates obedience to God by dying, but not staying dead.
- What does that mean for Christians in twenty-first century America?
 - It means recognizing that black and brown people in the US live with a level of fear and anxiety that white folks don't and working to ensure their safety.
 - It means that "pro-life" isn't just about preventing abortion, but also ending the death penalty.
 - It means acknowledging the reality of systemic poverty and not simply feeding the hungry, but working to fix the system that keeps them there.
 - And remember, Jesus says that a failure to bear our cross—the failure to suffer with others—is a denial of our Lord.
- Was I right? Are you as uncomfortable as I am?
 - Welcome to Lent...a season when we find ourselves squirming as we acknowledge our own shortcomings, failures...*sin*.
 - Here's Good News: **Jesus'** death is our salvation!
 - We aren't going into eternity because of what we got right in the world.
 - We **have** eternity because Jesus made things right for us when he bore his cross.
 - That doesn't let us off the hook in caring for others, but it gives us the courage o confess our brokenness and sin, because we know that sin isn't our end.
 - Amen.