

2024-02-25 Mark 8:31-38 Second Sunday in Lent

Sermon by the Reverend Cheryl Kester-Schmidt

Any day spent in the presence of the flesh and blood Jesus would be an incredible day. The disciples had the honor of being with Him for three years in ministry. They were now sure of what they had only suspected that day on the beach, when they left everything behind and obeyed His command; to come follow him; to follow the man from Galilee.

In our gospel today, Peter may have been lost in thought considering the blessings promised with the coming of the Messiah! How incredible, all of God's promises are nearly fulfilled! The suffering of God's people would soon to be over! His mind raced with all the implications of the Christ, being here, and now.

Then whoa! Wait! What is Jesus talking about now? Peter refocuses and listens more intently disappointed at what he was hearing as Jesus spoke:

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed,"

The alarm bells start going off. The Messiah, the Christ, the Son of Man is talking about suffering, being rejected by the leaders of God's people, and being killed. NO! No! No!

Peter does not disappoint and brings his foot in mouth with an emotional outburst. His friend and teacher, God's Chosen is threatened and along with it – hope.

Peter impulsively pulls Jesus aside, to stop the pessimistic talk, to assure Him that he, Peter would protect Him. Then Peter hears harsh words from Jesus,

"Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

If we unpack Peter's thoughts, we find he is attempting to keep Jesus away from the cross. His position is awkward, he is opposing the will of God. He is focused on his human world, and

the need to protect Jesus and keep him safe. Yet we know God's desire is greater! It is so great, that Peter does not take time to consider God's purpose for Jesus. He is thinking in human terms, and not God's.

Like Peter, we are easily ensnared by temptation and sin. We see our lives and priorities in the present and not through the eternal life in God through Jesus. We set our priorities, based on our timeline and for some of us the clock is sprinting toward the end.

This time of Lent is meant for us to ponder and reflect on our lives with Jesus. Our spiritual practices are to increase, however, usually we are tempted to put God in the back seat, and we skip our time of prayer and meditation on His Word. We miss church once and suddenly it turns into weeks. We worship stuff and our idol is our own pleasure. My sisters and brothers, our first priority, the central core of our lives, is based in our relationship with God. Yet, temptation calls and we put ourselves against God and choose sin.

Meanwhile, back with Peter, Jesus is not finished with him, or us. Peter recognized Jesus was the Christ, anointed by God with a special purpose. The one for whom God had planned His purpose from the foundation of the world. Jesus was anointed to suffer, to be rejected, to be killed, and then, to miraculously rise again on the third day.

There was a purpose to the anointing, to the cross. Our hearts are broken by our sin, and the sins of others. By His stripes we are healed. We are set free from sin, death and the devil. We exchange ashes, mourning, and weakness for beauty, gladness and praise.

We are no longer separated from God but gathered into His presence. We are invited to His banquet - truly the work of Christ: to gather us into the presence of God, to be Immanuel - God with us. Now, in times like this, and for eternity. That is the reason for his suffering, for his rejection, for his death, burial, and resurrection - so we can walk with God and have fellowship with Him through eternity.

We are chosen through our baptism and made righteous by God through Jesus. He bears our sin. He poured out His life as an offering, that we might know life – eternal life. He was anointed to die so we might live in peace with God.

The good news is Christ was anointed to bear our sin so that we might be gathered as the people of God. We are freed from our sins and made holy so we might have peace. AMEN!