

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**First Sunday in Lent, February 22, 2015**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 430, 1-6, 237:346, 330, 324: 7-8.

Lessons: Genesis 28: 10-22, Romans 5: 1-11, Matthew 16: 21-26.

Sermon Text: Mark 8: 31-38.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Today let's look at the first time Mark records Jesus telling his disciples exactly what he must do. You heard that Jesus *"began to teach [his disciples] that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."*

You know that this is exactly what is going to happen to Jesus. Today is the first Sunday in the season of the church year which is dedicated to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, called "the passion season", the season of Lent. It is good to be reminded again from God's Holy Word that

**JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF MAN, MUST DIE FOR SIN**

- 1. Peter, and all men, didn't want to hear about that.**
- 2. Peter, and all men, didn't want anything to do with the things of God.**
- 3. May we never be ashamed of Jesus!**

If you read Mark's gospel from the beginning, which is a short, fast-moving book of the Bible, you will notice that early in his ministry Jesus performed a lot of miracles and did a lot of preaching. When his disciples wanted him to perform more miracles, *"Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.'" (Mark 1:38 NIV)*

Preaching, proclaiming the good news was one of the very most important parts of Jesus' ministry.

But the very most important reason he came to earth is named in these words: *"the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."*

This is the very first time that Mark records Jesus speaking so bluntly about his mission and what is going to happen to him on earth. He had previously spoken only in veiled references, as in chapter 2 when he said to his disciples: *"How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast."* (Mark 2:19-20 NIV)

Jesus didn't want especially his closest disciples to think that he had come to be an earthly king or only an earthly messiah or deliverer. He wants them to know that he came to earth to deliver them – and all mankind – from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He came to earth to give them life and to give them the most abundant kind of life there is – eternal life.

Now when Jesus does speak to them very plainly about his coming suffering and death, they don't want to hear it, and Peter speaks for the disciples.

Jesus here predicted his death and resurrection and he began to teach his followers about the real reason that he, the very son of God came to earth.

*"He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."* Peter didn't want to hear this, and privately rebuked him, admonished him not to talk this way. Peter wanted to forbid Jesus to

speak of these things. Like all men, Peter didn't want God to do things his way. Peter wanted to find another way. Peter didn't want to hear about this.

Men are no different today. They don't want to hear about Jesus dying for their sins. First of all, people don't want to hear about their sins. It is most unpopular to talk about sin today. The world is so caught up in the idea that we must show "love" that we dare never speak of anything bad or wrong that people do. Even many churches are caught up in teaching and preaching what people want to hear. We are surely in the time in history of which Paul wrote to Timothy: ***"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."*** (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NIV) Just as human laws and standards of right and wrong are increasingly being based solely on the changing opinions of men instead of some kinds of religious concepts, even churches have caved in to preaching and teaching what men want to hear. This has happened because, first of all, men have rejected the idea of verbal inspiration. God's Word teaches, and we believe and confess, that ***"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*** (2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV)

What is it that men want to hear, even from their churches? Don't they want to hear what good people they are? Don't they want to hear about what should be done to help the poor people and provide food and shelter for the homeless and opinions about what should be done by government? Don't they want to hear about some kind of "good works" or "good deeds" they have done and are supposed to do to earn their way to eternal life? Aren't people happy hearing some kind of 'social gospel' about loving mankind?

But remember that the greatest love ever is the kind of love God showed to mankind to take sin away: ***"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*** (John 3:16-18 KJV)

And what is it that men want to talk about? They want to talk about their good deeds. They want others to recognize what great people they are. We all want to hide our sins. And if we don't think we have sins, we don't need a savior from sin. Peter is just like us, and we are just like Peter. Men don't want things God's way.

***"But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'"***

It is easy to think that it was only Peter who had only the things of men on his mind. Who knows what all Peter was thinking? Jesus is extremely blunt. He calls him Satan – the devil – the arch-enemy of God! What a shock this must have been for Peter. But sometimes our sinful flesh needs a shock to point us back to Jesus Christ. Could Peter have been wondering when Jesus is going to raise an army, to gather an army so he can fight the Romans and chase them out of Israel so that he could restore David's kingdom to its previous borders? Even today there are Jews around the world who are still waiting for a messiah to do that. That is one reason there is so much conflict in and around the physical nation of Israel today: Jews in general believe that they have a claim to the lands which were once part of the grand kingdom of Israel under king David, and are waiting for someone – an earthly messiah – to give them all that land back again.

But Peter in our text, and we in our lives, that is, our unregenerate, sin-filled, old-man lives, don't want anything to do with the things of God. When things are going well, it's easy not to think about God and salvation. Under such circumstances, it is easy not to think about God and his work of love in sending us a savior from our sins.

Oh, sure, I can think about the beauty of God's creation. I can spend time in the beauties of nature. But that only teaches me that there is a God. The only way I can learn about God's love and Gospel is from the Bible, the written Word of God.

How easy is it six days a week, and most hours on Sunday to think about and be concerned and worried about the things of man and of this world?

Yes, we are just like Peter. Jesus must say of us: ***"You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*** But Jesus died for those sins, too. We repent, not just on communion Sunday, but every day. We turn to the words of Jesus: Your sins are forgiven!

It then becomes our joy to turn to Jesus and follow him, just as he tells Peter and the whole crowd along with his disciples: ***"Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"***

Yes, with the hymn writer, you, a Christian, ask: What is the world to me? Jesus is far more important than the world. We know that we must deny ourselves and follow Jesus. We know that losing our lives for Jesus leads us on the road to eternal life. But we have to be reminded of this. We ask God to remind us of this daily. And following Jesus in doing good deeds does not earn us eternal life. It is our way of showing love back toward God who gives us eternal life simply by believing in Jesus and his work.

Jesus closes this section of the scriptures with the words ***"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."***

Yes, there are times we are ashamed of being Christians. There are many times when we are ashamed that Jesus asks us to turn our back on the things of the world. But we must search the scriptures and dig ever deeper into his word for words of eternal life.

Like all of us, Peter had another lapse into sin here. But we must remember Peter's words of faith as recorded in John 6:68-69 (KJV) ***"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."***

That is really our confession. May our Lord give us strength, power, will, and ability to always make that our confession, not only in words, but in all our life. Amen.