

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Quinquagesima Sunday, February 14, 2010

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Hymns: 351, 142:1, 353: 1-4, 151, 45.

Lessons: Isaiah 53: 1-12, 1 Peter 4: 1-13, Matthew 16: 13-28.

Sermon Text: Mark 8: 27-33

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Let me make up a story for you. Think of this as purely fiction. Suppose you are working for a small company. Things are going really well. There are only about a dozen employees, and the boss, who started and owns the company, is really a dynamic, great guy. He is getting things done, and you are learning a great deal from him. You really believe in the product he is producing. People are learning about your product and they can't get enough of it. Perhaps you envision the company growing and you see yourself becoming one of the important managers. Then the boss, the owner of the company, drops a bombshell. He says business is really going to get bad. We are going to lose our customers. They are going to turn against us. We are going to enter a very difficult time. He even says something about his competitors plotting to murder him. You just can't understand what's going on. You wonder what in the world is he talking about. What are you going to do without the boss, the owner of the company?

Now I'm not very good at making up parables. You know how good Jesus, the very Son of God was at telling parables. So let's get back to talking about what the Bible says.

By the time of our sermon text, about half-way through the gospel according to St. Mark, it has become more and more evident that the large majority in Galilee rejected Jesus in unbelief and the hostility against him has increased as time goes on. Of course you know how that Bible History lesson is going to end. It is going to end in Jerusalem with the death of Jesus. The time is rapidly approaching when he shall suffer and die and leave the world with his visible presence.

Jesus then devotes most of his attention to the instruction of those few who will continue his work after him and carry his name into all the world. In a very blunt way,

JESUS TELLS HIS DISCIPLES WHAT MUST HAPPEN TO HIM

- 1. They believe he is the Christ, the son of the living God.**
- 2. He tells them that he will suffer, die and after three days rise again.**

In this lesson, Jesus took the opportunity to ask his disciples some questions concerning the knowledge they had gained. He asked them what opinion the people had concerning Him: "*Who do people say I am?*" Peter speaks for all the disciples and answered Him: "*Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.*"

Matthew gives us more of Peter's answer. He says "*Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'*" *Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'*" Matthew 16:16-19. Peter's complete answer would be the subject for another sermon, but today we wish to look at the fact that after his answer Jesus tells his disciples what is going to happen to him.

His disciples believe that he is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the true God. But he tells them not to tell anyone, at least not yet. The time has not yet come when he should be revealed to all people as the very Son

of the true God, the Christ, that is, the Messiah. The people were waiting for a Messiah that fit their own pictures of someone to restore the visible splendor of David's kingdom. But Jesus the Christ was not that kind of a Messiah. Jesus did not want to fulfill this delusion of the people, and it certainly didn't fit with his mission from eternity to save all mankind by dying for their sins.

Nor were his disciples ready to proclaim him as the Messiah. They still did not have the correct picture of Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah. It was only after his death, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, that the true picture of the Messiah would be clearer in their minds so that they could teach others.

But Jesus here does not speak in parables, or allusions, or vague references. He comes right out and says what will happen to him. "**He then began to teach them 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.**" It was essential that he instruct his disciples concerning the truth. And so, this is the first time St. Mark, and all the evangelists, record that Jesus explicitly predicted his coming suffering and death. Before this he had only spoken about it in a veiled way, as in Matthew 12:38-40: "**Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, 'Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.' He answered, 'A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'**"

Now he spoke plainly at this time so that his disciples might understand that his being the Christ, as Peter had confessed him on behalf of the other disciples, did not make him an earthly king. Unfortunately this was a false hope that continued to linger in their hearts until his ascension into heaven. Just before his ascension into heaven some of them even asked "**Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?**" Acts 1:6. That's why Jesus generally spoke of himself as the Son of Man, not the Christ.

Jesus began teaching the disciples by saying that "the Son of Man must suffer". He said that because that is what the Old Testament taught, starting with the first Gospel promise: "**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.**" Genesis 3:15. That is also very plain from Isaiah 53:4-8: "**Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.**"

By using the word "must," Jesus informed his disciples that this was something that could not be avoided if mankind – all people – were to be saved. When he uses the word must, this shows that there is no choice for him. This is the way it must be. "**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**" John 3:16.

Jesus in our text identifies the very men would cause him to suffer and die and showed that he knew the future. He specifically names three groups of representatives of the people of Israel: the elders, chief priests, and the scribes. These three groups made up the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin. These were the ones who would reject and condemn him. These were the men -- the 71 members of the Jewish high court -- who had responsibility in both the religious and political realms in Judea. And when Jesus said the Son of Man must be killed, he also involved the Roman government. The Sanhedrin at that time no longer had the authority to carry out the death sentence, but the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate did. In this way Jesus clearly stated that his suffering and death would happen, that it would be inevitable.

But death would not be the end. The final victory would come three days after his death: He would rise again. But the disciples constantly forgot this. To begin with, they did not want to accept the fact that he, their Lord and Master, would suffer and die. That's why on the day of resurrection, they were really surprised that the tomb was empty.

Jesus' statement on this day must have come as quite a shock to his followers. Jesus seemed to be at the peak of his popularity among the people. And now he was telling them that he would suffer much, and die?

Christ here says that he will rise from the dead "after three days". Scripture also says that on the third day Christ would rise from the dead. Is there a contradiction? No. "After three days" did not necessarily mean after three full days, but the passing of parts of three days. In this case they were the afternoon of Friday, when Christ died, the day, Saturday, his body was in the grave, and in the morning, Sunday, he rose again.

Our text says "***He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.***" Peter wanted to argue with him, and tell him he should not do this. This is perhaps the most shocking element in this account; that Peter wanted to try to persuade him under no circumstance to suffer and die. It shows us that his and the other disciples' understanding of the name "Christ" was corrupted by false expectations. That's why Jesus in answering Peter directs the answer to all the disciples. They all need correction. Peter shows at this time that he did not agree with God's plan of salvation. But without Christ's suffering, death and resurrection we and all mankind would still be in our sins and lost forever.

Jesus speaks quite harshly or sharply to Peter. St. Matthew again tells us more: "***Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.***" Matthew 16:23. Peter's words were certainly a temptation, an offense to Jesus, a stumbling block. Peter spoke the words, but ultimately they came from Satan, and so Jesus' words are certainly appropriate. How often don't we forget that Satan is behind all evil thoughts, words and deeds in our lives! We admit that we must daily fight against the devil, the world, and our flesh.

So Jesus resisted this temptation also, a temptation that came to him through a beloved disciple.

The two facts – first that He had just acknowledged Himself to be the Messiah – and second that He now spoke of suffering and dying did not seem to Peter to agree with each other. He had an altogether different idea concerning the work of a Messiah. There was a lesson for all the disciples here. Jesus then turned to Peter and reprimanded him most severely. Peter's suggestion and opinion had nothing of God's will in it, but only that of man, weak, sinful man, that cannot understand God's ways and works. All the disciples felt the reproof, though it was directed toward Peter. And the warning stands today for all those who would weaken the fact of Christ's suffering and death on behalf of sinful mankind. In the suffering and death of Christ divine and human ways and methods part company. The cross of Christ is foolishness and an offense to human ideas, but in reality it is divine wisdom and divine power.

We have heard, some of us many times, the outcome of this history of Jesus Christ. He had to suffer much, and he had to die. But we find joy and true happiness in the fact that he died for me, in my place, so I don't have to die in hell. And then, of course, there is the joy of the fact that he must also rise again after three days, on the third day. As we approach the season of Lent to review our Savior's suffering and death, his passion, may we never forget the glorious conclusion of those 40 days of special worship services in Lent: the day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Amen.