

Theme: Crossroads

Background: We will explore the cost and hope of accepting faith's call to follow God's Christ.

Agenda

Territorial Acknowledgement -

Opening Prayer: Holy God, make us mindful of your presence. Open our minds and hearts to the call of Christ: a call we hear in Scripture, a call we discern in community, a call we carry out in our lives beyond this circle. This we pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

Mark 8:31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Mark 8:32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

Mark 8:33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Mark 8:34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Mark 8:35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

Mark 8:36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

Mark 8:37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

Mark 8:38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Reflection Questions for Discussion

- 1) How do you feel about speaking truth to power?
- 2) What are the parallels between Alexei Navalny, Jamal Khashoggi and Jesus?
- 3) What is the difference between a “theology of glory” and a “theology of the cross”?
- 4) What were the motives Peter might have had in seeking to redefine what it means for Jesus to be the “Christ” (in Small’s words, “what people want in a god”)?
- 5) Did Jesus attend the Annual General Meeting of the Sea of Galilee Synagogue?

Let us discuss:

What
Where
So What
Now What

Final Thoughts and Reflections.

Pastoral Concerns.

Prayer For Our Community

Go as one, called by Jesus to follow;

**Serve as one, following the example of Christ's own ministry;
Trust that life belongs to God, and in God, your life will not be lost,
but found. Live in hope; serve with love; go in peace. Amen.**

Focus on Mark 8:31–38

WHAT is important to know?

— From “*Exegetical Perspective*,” Jouette M. Bassler

A climactic moment in Mark’s Gospel occurs when Peter acknowledges Jesus’ true status: “You are the Messiah” (Mark 8:29). This reading presents the ensuing conversation, which clarifies what Jesus’ messiahship entails. The pattern of this passage—Jesus’ prediction of his suffering, misunderstanding and resistance by his disciples, teachings on the nature of discipleship—appears twice more in the Gospel (9:30–37; 10:32–45). But by the end of this section the disciples seem no closer to comprehension and acceptance than they were at the beginning.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “*Theological Perspective*,” Joseph D. Small

It is easy for us to skip over Peter’s shock and revulsion at the prospect of a suffering messiah; we know the end of the story. This hinge in Mark’s Gospel points us to Martin Luther’s contrast between what he called the “theology of glory” and the “theology of the cross.” The theology of glory is built on assumptions about the way a god is expected to act in the world. The theology of the cross, however, is grounded in God’s self-revelation in the weakness of suffering and death. The theology of glory confirms what people want in a god; the theology of the cross contradicts everything that people imagine that God should be.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “*Pastoral Perspective*,” Paul C. Shupe

Mark has put this teaching moment of Jesus with his *disciples* at the center of his Gospel. Doing so, he reminds us that the first call Jesus made to others was not to be apostles or to be ordained or even to be members in the church, but simply to be his disciples, taking responsibility for going on their own journeys of faith with the living God. During Lent we are wise to ponder the picture of Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, calling all his disciples to take up our own crosses and to walk with him in paths of love and service.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “*Homiletical Perspective*,” W.

Hulitt Gloer

This is a word for *everyone* who would be Jesus’ disciple then and now. We must “deny” self; so long as the tyranny of self exists, we will never “take up” the cross. We will forever be seeking painless shortcuts to the kingdom. All our efforts to make another way are a denial of the one who showed us the way, the way of the cross. When we are finally willing to accept Jesus for who he is, the suffering one who lays down his life for others, then we can understand who we are to be, and we can take up the cross and follow him.