

"Where Is Your Mind Set?"

Lent 2B, March 8, 2009

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

Mark 8: (27-30) 31-38

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

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. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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."

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. 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. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 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."

Prayer.

After each of three passion predictions
The gospel makes clear
The disciples still do not understand.

Allow me to be perfectly candid
Before this, our consecrated altar to our God,
Upon which sits a meal prepared for us,
Paid for by the death of God's own Son,
Sent to forgive and to save us:
- allow me to be perfectly candid -
Each of us live a very selfish,
Me centered,
Life.

Our agenda is revealed with the simple greeting:
"How are you today?"
Pandora opens the box
And it's off to the races:

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we have open season (it appears)
 To share every detail of our Me centered life.
 We talk about family, work, travel, politics and sports.
 We talk about science, music, or the latest celebrity gossip.
 We talk about things that interest Me.
 We talk about ourselves until we are blue in the face!
 Rarely do we cede the high ground
 And allow the other to speak about their concerns.
 Remove the first person pronouns from our speech
 And most of us would be speechless;
 Present company included.
 (there I go; ironic. Isn't it?)

After each of three passion predictions
 The gospel makes clear
 The disciples still do not understand.

Peter knows that Jesus is the Messiah,
 God's anointed one.
 But there is Peter's understanding of Messiah,
 And there is Jesus' understanding of Messiah;
 And a vast gulf exists between them.
 "Who do people say that I am?" Jesus asks.
 "You are the Messiah" Peter proudly responds,
 imagining to himself
 all the wonderful possibilities
 of what Jesus can do for him
 and how he can improve his life.
 Enter Peter's imagination with me for a moment:
 Jesus will kick Rome out of our land –
 - oh, how I'd like to be rid of them.
 Or, Jesus will rebuild a Jewish state,
 To the same glorious standards as King David,
 Over a thousand years ago,
 And I will bask in the light of prosperity.
 Or, Jesus will take the throne,
 And lower my taxes.
 Jesus is wonderful
 As long as he benefits Me!

As long as he benefits me,
 I'll believe anything:
 He is the son of God,
 He can walk on water,
 Heck, I'd even believe he can change water into wine,

Heal the sick,
 And raise the dead,
 So long as he benefits Me.

Welcome to our world, Peter.

As long as there has been organized religion,
 There have been people asking the question,
 "What can I get out of it?"
 "I've been searching for a church that meets my needs," I've heard many comment.
 "I want to raise my children with a Christian foundation."
 "I want a service that feeds me."
 "I want a pastor that I like."
 "I want a church that doesn't ask for money all the time."
 "I want to hedge my bet to ensure that I get eternal life."
 Most of us respond with *the sell*,
 The pitch,
 The smoozed over marketing spin of neo-evangelism,
 All being much too polite to honestly respond,
 "But what does God want for your life?"

After each of three passion predictions
 The gospel makes clear
 The disciples still do not understand.

Lent humbly reminds us of how little we understand, too.
 The disciplined, well trained, and deeply experienced psychotherapist
 Is able to remove the self from the equation:
 Always asking the reflective questions,
 To place the focus entirely upon their paying client.
 What Jesus appears to be doing,
 In the context of Lent,
 And through the conduit of the Gospel,
 Is to shift the paradigm even further:
 Away from the self
 And towards the agenda of an interested and loving God.

God's agenda is far greater than a political solution to the ills of the world.
 God's agenda is all about bringing people to repentance
 Restoring people into a perfected relationship with God.
 God's agenda is
 To forgive people for past sin
 And to guide people into pathways of righteousness.
 God's agenda is
 To bring healing to a broken world,

Including the ultimate act of healing
 - the resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting.
 Jesus has far bigger fish to fry
 Than to be concerned with Peter's selfish desires.
 He has far bigger concerns
 Than our Me centered existence.

Jesus rebukes Peter,
 And he rebukes each of us today
 With a reminder of why he came,
 And why he comes again.

Let us consider Jesus,
 Not in human terms,
 But in godly terms.
 It is the stuff of Satan
 To think of Jesus in respect of what he can do for us.
 Rather it is the new "Christos" that Jesus describes
 - The passion, death, and resurrection -
 The will of God
 That means for us to experience
 The complete fixation of our body, mind, and heart
 Solely and singly upon the will and ways of our loving and gracious God.
 Deny the self;
 Follow Jesus.
 This describes perfectly
 The fact that Jesus is calling us to sit on our selfish hands
 And to devote ourselves, our life, our all to the faithful attention to God.

Where is your mind set?
 Our Gospel asks today.
 Is it set upon the self
 Or is it set upon God?
 Consider this as our challenge
 Even as we come to the table to
 Eat this bread
 And partake of this cup
 To become one with His body,
 Broken by this world
 For the redemption of this world.
 Amen.