

Mark 8:27-35 NIV

JESUS: His Identity, His Work, and Our Following!

Sunday, January 18 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, January 19 at 7 PM

The Confession of St. Peter – 2015

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: The Almighty God has *super-high standards*; therefore, He demands *absolute perfection!* In fact He said: “...**be holy, because I am holy.**” (Lev. 11:44 NIV) Therefore, we **all** have a HUGE problem! Since **all** have sinned, none of us can *attain perfection or be holy* 😊. So we desperately need to be saved by someone *who is much greater than we are!*

That statement brings us to the season of Epiphany, *the time of the church year when we focus on who Jesus is!* Last week God the Father said of Jesus: “**You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.**” (Mark 1:4 NIV) Now, today, we focus on ✦ Peter’s description of Jesus, ✦ Jesus’ saving work, ✦ the importance of a proper mindset, and ✦ the requirements to follow Jesus!

1. **Peter’s Description of Jesus:** ²⁷ **Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.¹ On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”** ²⁸ **They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”** ²⁹ **“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” //**
 - a. The setting: They were near Caesarea Philippi, *which is near the northern tip of Israel; Nazareth*

¹ “Philip called the new city Caesarea, in honor of the emperor, but to distinguish it from the city of the same name on the western coast of Palestine, he added his own name as a distinguishing mark.” (Kretzmann, NT 1:209)

is in the north, *but Caesarea Philippi is about 50 miles further to the north.* Most people in that area were *not* believers.

- b. The questions:
 - i. Who do the people in this area think I am? Their answers were **high** – John, Elijah, a prophet – **but they were not nearly high enough!** John, Elijah, and the prophets were godly men, *but they could not save anyone – not even themselves!*
 - ii. Who do YOU say I am? Peter answered on behalf of the group: “**You are the Christ,**” thus ✦ the Messiah, ✦ the Prince of Peace, ✦ the Lamb of God – *who will take away the sin of the world!* Therefore, John wrote: “He who has the Son has the life 😊; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life 😊.” (1 John 5:12 NAS)
2. **Jesus’ Saving Work:** ³⁰ **Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.** ³¹ **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. //**
 - a. Jesus’ warning: *Don’t tell anyone about me!* That seems unusual, but Dr. Kretzmann said it was “**to prevent the spread of false ideas regarding the work of the Messiah**” (210) – *to prevent people from thinking that Jesus came to establish a worldly empire.* Instead, **He came to rule over our hearts and lives!**

- b. Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection: It's natural to think like this: *comfort and life* equal a **win**, while *suffering and death* equal a **loss**. Yet Jesus' suffering and death is how He won over sin, death, and the devil. He is the winner; then we share in that victory *by grace through faith!*
3. **The Importance of a Proper Mindset:** ³² **He** [Jesus] **spoke plainly about this** [His suffering, death, and resurrection], **and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.** ³³ **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."** //
- a. Peter had a temporal mindset: From Peter's way of thinking, the realities of Jesus ✓ *being the Christ*, then ✓ *suffering and dying* were incompatible! Peter wanted to *prevent* Jesus' suffering and death. Therefore, Jesus called him **"Satan"** – *the one who ultimately wanted to keep Jesus from winning!* Even today people struggle when *those who believe in Jesus* ♦lose their jobs or ♦are diagnosed with cancer; those things can seem incompatible, yet *God is at work on a higher and eternal level* (Isaiah 55:9; Romans 8:28).
- b. Jesus had an eternal mindset: So He was willing to *suffer the worst in this temporal life* so that all who believe in Him would be blessed forever!
4. **The Requirements to Follow Jesus:** ³⁴ **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.** ³⁵ **For whoever**

wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." // Notice how Jesus addressed everyone – **the crowd and His disciples**. Also, He said: **"If anyone would come after me..."** The idea of **"come after"** is *to follow*. Where has Jesus gone? *To heaven!*

- a. Deny and take up:
- i. Deny: Christians have two opposing wills: ✓ one desires to live *for self*, ✓ the other desires to live *for God*. The Lutheran Study Bible notes: **"Just as [Jesus] willingly submits to God's will, even when that is painful, so they [His followers] must also submit."** (1675)
- ii. Take up: To accept the burdens of living for Christ. The Bible says that **"all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."** (2 Tim. 3:12 NAS)
- b. Save or lose: Those who choose to **save** their lives by living for self and avoiding persecution *will be eternal losers!* But those who **lose** their lives by denying and taking up *will be eternal winners!*

Conclusion: Since we are unholy, *God is offering us His gift of holiness through Jesus!* Therefore, *seeing our desperate need*, let us gladly embrace our Savior; then, knowing Jesus and having the promise of eternal life, let us → deny ourselves and → accept the difficulties of following Him! And all God's people said: **Amen!**