

JESUS IS THE CHRIST

A fact that condemns the unbeliever -- A truth that comforts the believer.

Mark 8:27-35

TEXT: *Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about 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. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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." 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.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Do you ever wonder what people think of you?

Some people worry too much about what people think of them, and spend their lives anxiously trying to please everybody. Some people covet attention and dream of being popular or important. They publish every little achievement they accomplish on social media pages so that others might be wishing they were them. Some people care nothing at all about what people think of them, and live their lives as arrogant slobs and bullies. Somewhere there is a proper balance, right?

Jesus was concerned about what people thought about him, not because he worried about his reputation, and not because he was trying to establish a proper balance. Jesus was concerned about what people were thinking about him because it meant the difference between heaven and hell for the people. The Bible says:

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." John the Baptist and Elijah, as well as the great prophets of old, preached the same message as Jesus: repent and believe in God's Christ. But this preaching was turning people off. They wanted Jesus only for his miracles. The fact is, however, that Jesus was about to die a horrible death as the Christ of God.

Saving mankind would not be a pretty picture in the eyes of the unbelieving world. That's why Jesus turned to His disciples and said: *But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"* Jesus worked hard to teach this truth to those disciples soon to become His apostles. **JESUS IS THE CHRIST!** A fact that condemns the unbeliever; and, A truth that comforts the believer.

Jesus was teaching His disciples, and they cannot be confused about this truth. He is the Christ of God, and there is no other Savior. They must know and believe this fact, not only for their own salvation, but for the salvation of all to whom they will be sent. For they must go out into the world and declare: *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.* Ac 4:12 This is a fact, the truth, that is proclaimed by God, and there is no other Savior.

This confession is Satan's target. The Bible says: *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. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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."* What did Peter say that brought such a powerful and cutting rebuke? Jesus gives us the answer. Peter did not have the things of God on his mind, but the things of men.

The "things of God" are revealed in Scripture. From the moment the Lord told Satan that the Descendant of Eve would crush his head to the day when Jesus cried out "It is finished," the only things that were of God were those that revolved around this simple promise. For example: Four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, were preceded by God's manipulation of climate change that brought Joseph's brothers to Egypt to buy food. And why was that? God had told great-grandfather Abraham that they would be slaves for 400 years. And why was that? To separate these people from the rest of the world as the people from whom that

Descendent of Eve, the Savior, would come. The other “bookend” on this piece of history was Moses who brought the Israelites out of Egypt to the promised land. It was all about THE CHRIST.

All of this was about the one who was saying to Peter: *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...* So when Peter began to rebuke Jesus for talking so negatively, Jesus rebuked him with a most powerful rebuke: *Get behind me, Satan!* You see, it’s all about Jesus, the Christ of God, the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophets. If it seems too complicated, then focus on what Jesus so plainly says about the Christ of God: *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.* Do you have in mind the things of man or of God?

Even today, “repent and believe in Jesus” is a message that turns people off. First of all, our society has developed a powerful tolerance of sin without repentance, and they call it “love.” They say “sorry” but do not want to stop sinning! Do you do that? You do! So do I. That’s because we have a sinful nature that is only evil all the time. But there is a difference between those who can’t stop sinning and those who do not want to stop sinning and who will not stop. God knows the difference. Those who want to stop sinning but cannot love Jesus, the Christ, because only his death and resurrection is our hope. It’s as Paul confessed: *... in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!* Ro 7

While this truth condemns the unbeliever, it is eternal comfort for each and every soul that will believe this simple truth.

What’s going to comfort you when you stand at the throne of God who searches the heart and even knows the number of hairs on your head? Will it not be those three basic truths revealed by the cross and open tomb of Jesus, the water of His Holy Baptism, and the bread and wine that delivers to us the actual body and blood of the Savior for the forgiveness of our sins? Turn everything else over to Satan and let him have my good works, my good name, my earthly successes, my plans and dreams, and let me hold on to the faithfulness of God in the keeping of His promises. My Baptism is God’s pledge of a clean conscience before Him. My consumption of the bread and wine of Holy Communion is my communion with the Christ to died and rose again for the forgiveness of my sins. My faith in God’s faithfulness is the perfect comfort that is revealed by Jesus who said: *I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"* The woman to whom Jesus said these words answered: *Yes, Lord, ... I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.* Jn 11 Oh, what comfort this sweet sentence gives to all who believe this!

But do not fall to the deception of Satan as did Peter that day when Jesus rebuked him. To help keep Peter and all God’s people humbly trusting in the cross of Christ, Jesus explained: *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.* The things of man are simply not the things of the cross. How simple is that! Got good health, financial security, a loving spouse, good children? What blessings! But none of these can save you on Judgment Day. Should the Lord deem it wise to take these things from my life, who am I to argue? Who am I to be Peter and take him aside and rebuke him, argue with him and say that what he says is unwise? Instead, may each and every one of us believe that Jesus is the Christ and so humbly and even gladly pick up each and every cross of this life that the Lord should wisely place on our shoulders and carry it, trusting that God knows what he is doing!

Jesus is the Christ of God and our comfort is in the fact that we can trust him. Amen.