



RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

THE WEEKLY BRICK

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As you come to him, the living Stone-rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-you also, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. - 1 Peter 2:4-5

Choosing My Life Direction *Mark 8:27-38*

Mark 8:34 *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.

There are two roads in discipleship: indulging self vs. denying self.

Jesus was very pointed: there is a life of self-indulgence and there is a life of self-denial. A person has to make a choice between...

loving comfort and ease	or	commitment and discipline
loving wealth and property	or	work and compassion
loving recognition and fame	or	humility and sacrifice
loving position and power	or	service and ministry
loving pleasure and feeling	or	righteousness and self-control

The question is: “How does you go about making the right choice?” Jesus said four things.

1. YOU MUST *DESIRE TO COME AFTER HIM*

WOULD (*thelei*): to desire, wish, design, purpose, resolve, determine. It is a deliberate willing, a deliberate choice, a determined resolve to follow Christ. If you deliberately choose to follow Christ then you must do the three things mentioned.

Note, the choice is voluntary. It is not forced upon you.

2. YOU MUST *DENY YOURSELF*

Deny (*aparneomai*): to disown, disregard, forsake, renounce, reject, refuse, restrain, disclaim, do without. It means to subdue, to disregard oneself and one’s interest. Very simply, it means to say “no.” But note: the call is not to say “no” to some behavior or thing, but to *self*. A person is to *deny self*. This means much more than just being negative, that is, giving up something and doing without something. It means that we are to act positively, to say “yes” to Christ and “no” to self. It means to let Christ rule and reign in one’s heart and life, to let Christ have His way completely.

3. YOU MUST *TAKE UP YOUR CROSS*

The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. You’ve got to deny yourself daily. Let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in you and fill your thoughts every day ([Phil. 2:5-8](#); [2 Cor. 10:3-5](#)). Put your will, desires, wants, ambitions to death. In their place, follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behavior. It takes positive, active behavior to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up* one’s *cross*, to *follow* Christ. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent, and enduring in order to die to self.

4. YOU MUST *FOLLOW CHRIST*

Follow (*akoloutheō*): to be a follower or companion, to be a disciple. It has the idea of seeking to be in union with and in the likeness of. It is following Christ, seeking to be just like Him. Again, this is not passive behavior, but an active commitment and walk. It is energy and effort, action and work. It is going after Christ with zeal and energy, struggling and seeking to follow in His footsteps no matter the cost. Note that His steps lead to death before they lead to glory.

Monday, September 14th *Read Mark 8:27-30*

What a great passage! Here we have the great confession of Peter. Most people do not object to the idea of a Messiah, that is, a deliverer, savior, provider, and protector. Most people want a leader who is going to bring about a utopian society that will provide social justice and plenty for everyone. What people want is a Messiah who fits into the wants and passions and power structures of their world. People want their bellies full, their bodies clothed and housed, and their urges satisfied. They want the *good things* of this world. If a Messiah can give these, then people are ready and willing to accept the Messiah. Jesus deliberately set out to make sure that the disciples saw Him as God's Messiah and not a human made Messiah. He had to make sure they understood God's way of salvation and utopia, that God was after victory over death and a life that lasted eternally, not just for seventy or so years. God's Messiah and salvation was not people's way of power and pleasure; it was not leaving the future to take care of itself.

Jesus was facing the end very, very soon and there was still much to teach the disciples. It was time for them to learn that He was building a church—an assembly of people who would be confessing Him to be the Messiah. The present passage is one of the most dramatic revelations ever made. It is also one of the most demanding questions ever asked. The answer given determines one's eternal destiny and requires a single answer: "Thou art the Christ." The importance of the question and its confession is clearly seen by glancing quickly at the points of the passage. The organizational structure is as follows:

1. Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi (v.27).
2. The confession of people: He is a great man (v.28).
3. The confession of His disciples: He is the Christ (v.29).
4. The need: to learn about God's Messiah (v.30).

In 8:27 Jesus left Bethsaida and travelled about the towns of Caesarea Philippi. This city had a rich religious history. It had once been the center of Baal worship with at least fourteen temples in and around the city. It was believed to have within its borders the cavern in which the Greek god of nature, Pan, was born. In the beginning of its history the city was so identified with this god that it was named after the god, being called Panias. One of its most beautiful structures was the gleaming white marble temple built for the worship of Caesar. Herod the Great had built the temple in honor of Caesar when Caesar bestowed on him another country. But it was Herod's son Philip who adorned the temple with the magnificence for which it was known world-wide. It was also Philip who changed the name of the city from Panias to Caesarea, Caesar's town. He added his own name also, calling the city Caesarea Philippi.

The city proclaimed far and wide the worship of Caesar and of the gods of one's choice, that is, the worship of all except the One true and living God. It was against this dramatic yet terrible background that Jesus asked the pointed question, "But who do you say that I am?" (emphatic Greek translation). It was against this background of religion that Peter made his great discovery and confession: Jesus is the Christ, the real Messiah.

Tuesday, September 15th *Read Mark 8:28*

The confession of people shortchanged Jesus. Most people saw Jesus only as a great man, a man who was highly esteemed and respected. He was considered one of the greatest of men, but note a crucial point: these *professions* were not only untrue, they were dangerous. They contained only half-truths, and people were deceived and misled by them.

1. **Some said Jesus was John the Baptist.** They professed Jesus to be a great spirit of righteousness, a spirit that was willing to be martyred for its faith. Herod and others thought this ([Matthew 14:1-2](#)). Upon hearing of Jesus' marvelous works, Herod fancied that either John had been revived or else his spirit indwelt the man Jesus. The common people also saw some similarity between John and Jesus: both were doing a great work for God; both were divinely chosen and gifted by God; and both proclaimed the Kingdom of God and prepared men for it. Therefore, when some looked at Jesus and His ministry, they thought Jesus was not the Messiah Himself, but the promised forerunner of the Messiah ([Malachi 4:5](#)).
2. **Some said Jesus was Elijah.** They professed Jesus to be the greatest prophet and teacher of all time, for Elijah was so considered. Elijah was predicted to be the forerunner of the coming Messiah ([Malachi 4:5](#)). Even today the Jews expect Elijah to return before the Messiah. In the celebration of the Passover they always leave a chair vacant for him to occupy. Elijah had also been used by God to miraculously feed a widow woman and her son ([1 Kings 17:14](#)); therefore, the people connected Elijah's miracle and Jesus' feeding of the multitude.
3. **Some said Jesus was one of the prophets.** They professed Jesus to be a great prophet sent for their day and time. He was thought to be one of the great prophets brought back to life or one in whom the spirit of a great prophet dwelt (cp. [Deut. 18:15, 18](#)).
The same false confessions about Christ exist in every generation.
 - 1) He was only a great man of righteousness who was martyred for His great faith. As such He leaves us a great example of how to live and stand up for what we believe.
 - 2) He was one of the greatest teachers and prophets of all time.
 - 3) He was only a great man who revealed some very important things to us about God and religion. As such He can make a significant contribution to every man in his search for God.
 - 4) He was only a great man, a prophet sent to the people (Jews) of His day from whom we can learn by studying His life.

John 1:10-11 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that

which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

John 8:19 *Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" "You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also."*

1 John 2:22-23 *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

1 John 4:3 *but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

Wednesday, September 16th *Read Mark 8:29-30*

The confession of the disciples was that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Note three facts that are stressed.

- 1. The word "say" (*eperōtaō*) means to ask, to question.** It is in the imperfect tense which means that Jesus kept on asking them. The question, "Who do you say that I am?" was extremely critical. The answer required concentrated thought and correct belief and genuine confession.
- 2. The question asked is emphatic in the Greek:** "But what about you. Who do you say that I am?" The answer to the question is critical; it is all important. It determines a person's destiny, his eternal destiny.
- 3. The answer given was immediate and terse:** "You are the Christ," that is, the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God (cp. [Matthew 16:16](#) for the full confession. Remember Mark was Peter's disciple, and what Mark is writing shows the humility of Peter. He usually de-emphasizes the facts surrounding Peter.)

The confession is momentous, arising from a personal conviction. It is both the confession that saves us lays the foundation for the church. The very life and survival of your soul and of the church as a whole rest upon this simple, yet profound conviction.

- 1. The Christ:** the Messiah; the anointed One of God.
- 2. The Son of God:** of the same being, the same substance; One with the Father.
- 3. Living:** the source and being of life; possessing the source, energy, and power of life within Himself.

In 8:30 the disciples had a great need to learn about *God's Messiah*. Note: Jesus instructed the disciples not to share their confession with anyone else—not now. Why? Because they were just beginning to learn what God's idea of the Messiah really meant. They had to know the truth and be accurate in their preaching of the truth before they began to share. They could do irreparable harm by spreading a false concept of the Messiah. Jesus had to protect them against this error.

Confession is just the beginning of our spiritual journey. There is much to study and learn about Christ after coming to know Him personally. Note two things.

- 1) We must be accurate in what we study.** We must make sure we learn the truth and not error.
- 2) We must be accurate in what we share,** making certain that we share the truth. This necessitates time to study and grow before we begin sharing.

1 Peter 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Thursday, September 17th *Read Mark 8:31-33*

People ache and search for utopia, for a messiah, for a savior who can bring utopia to earth. But there is a critical point to note. God's Messiah and humankind's messiah differ. Here is the organization of this section:

- 1. The way of God's Messiah (v.31).**
- 2. The way of man's messiah (v.32-33).**

In 8:31 we see the way of God's Messiah. The disciples had just made the profound confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God. At this point Jesus launched a new stage. He began to indoctrinate them into the way of God's Messiah, for God's Messiah was not man's messiah. Note several things.

1. The phrase "He began to teach them" is significant. Matthew says, "From that time forth"; that is, from the time of the profound confession that Jesus is the Messiah—beyond question the Messiah—something significant happened. A new stage was being launched. He revealed with a powerful thrust that the "Son of the living God" was going to be killed and raised again from the dead. Never before had this happened. Never again would it happen. History would be made. "Jerusalem...that killed the prophets" would now commit the ultimate crime: Jerusalem would kill God's own Son (cp. [Matthew 23:27](#)).

2. **Jesus had been telling His disciples about His death and resurrection for some time.** But they had not understood. First, the idea of a suffering Messiah differed radically from their own idea of the Messiah. And second, the revelation had been hidden in pictures and symbols.

John 2:19 *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*

John 3:14 *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,*

John 6:51 *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

The difference now was that Jesus no longer spoke in pictures and symbols. He told them in simple and direct words ([Matthew 20:18-20](#); [Luke 18:31-33](#)). A new stage in the revelation of God's plan for the world was now to take place: God's Son was to die and be raised again for the sins of the world. God's plan for saving the world was to take place through a suffering Messiah, not a conquering Messiah. God's Messiah was not going to deliver a materialistic world into the hands of His followers. Contrariwise, He was to die, and His death was to usher in the Kingdom of God and make it possible for His followers to live eternally in the very presence of God Himself.

3. The words "must [dei] suffer" are strong. "Must" is constraint, an utter necessity. It was absolutely necessary by the very nature of the case for Jesus to suffer. God is love and humankind is corruptible, so God, in love, must provide salvation for us. But God is also just, so He must provide salvation in such a way that justice will be done. The penalty must be paid; death must be carried out. Some Ideal Man must die for us so that His Ideal Death can stand for and cover all. There is only One Ideal Man: Jesus, the Son of God. The Son of God must become the Son of Man, the Ideal Man:

- ⇒ He must live a perfect life providing for the world the Ideal Righteousness or Ideal Life.
- ⇒ He must die, providing for the world the Ideal Death.
- ⇒ He must arise from the dead, providing for the world the Ideal Resurrection.

4. The words "suffer many things" include much more than just the sufferings surrounding His death. This is often overlooked. [Hebrews 5:8](#) makes this clear: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." However, the point is not seen unless one acknowledges the truth of the word Son, that is, Jesus' deity. Jesus is *the Son of God* who left the very presence of God. He left heaven with all the majesty and splendor, glory and worship, praise and honor due Him. He is *the Son of Heaven*, but He became the Son of a woman. He belonged in heaven, but He was present on earth. He had ruled in the perfect, incorruptible world, but He was now a servant in this imperfect and corruptible world. Every sight, sound, touch, taste—every experience and awareness was a world of distance from what He had known. He suffered through every moment and through every experience. Every experience drained "virtue" out of Him, for He always had before His face the truth and glory of heaven and the sin and corruption of earth.

Friday, September 18th Read Mark 8:31-33

Jesus' prediction of His resurrection is clear to us because we can look back upon it. But it was never clear to His disciples. Why? Very simply, it was to be a new experience. No one had ever risen from the dead, not a person who was never again to die. It had never happened before; it was unprecedented. Perhaps the disciples believed somewhat like Martha, that there was to be a future resurrection of all men ([John 11:24-26](#)). Such a belief was an expression of the hope that is within every man, the hope to continue on in some form of existence. Such a belief is easy to hold. But to think of an immediate resurrection, to think of a person arising from the dead today is difficult (just think about it). The idea of the Messiah dying and arising from the dead would be almost unimaginable to those who had not been taught the truth.

Just what the disciples thought Jesus meant by "being raised again" is not known. The fact that they did not fully understand is clear from the fact that their spirits were crushed when He was killed. But some of His followers seemed to grasp more of a real bodily resurrection than others. This is clear by an immediate remembrance of His words after His resurrection. For example, there was John who did believe immediately ([John 20:8-9](#)); there was Mary Magdalene who was shown that He had risen ([Matthew 28:6](#)). However, others were slower to understand and believe ([Mark 16:11](#); [John 20:24-25](#)).

Note the word "plainly" (*parresia*). It means plainly, unmistakably, frankly, without hesitation. Jesus literally indoctrinated His disciples with the fact and meaning of His death. He talked about it so much that it shook the apostles, so much so that they had Peter to confront Christ. Note three points.

People reject God's Messiah. They rebel at the idea of the cross. They want another way other than the cross. This is what Peter was doing: rebelling against the idea that *God's Son* was to die, that His blood was to be shed for the sins of the world ([1 Peter 2:24](#)). Peter could accept Jesus as *the Son of the living God*, but not as the Suffering Savior. Such an idea was repulsive and unacceptable to him. Therefore, he tried to stop the idea. Peter did two things.

- a. "Peter took Him" (*proslabomenos*). The Greek is strong. It means *caught hold*. Peter took hold and grabbed Jesus. Peter bodily took Jesus aside for a conference.
- b. Peter "began to rebuke [*epitiman*] Him." This again is strong. It is not just a wish, but a forcible attempt to stop the idea of the Suffering Savior: "This shall not be unto thee. This must not and cannot happen to you." *God forbid* is the equivalent idea. Peter was out to stop the cross. He was urging Jesus to be the Messiah of power, fame, and sensation that the Jews were expecting.

Peter was urging Jesus to follow his own human schemes instead of God's way. And by such, he was tempting Jesus with the very same compromises that Satan used to tempt Jesus, the compromises of power, fame, and sensations ([Matthew 4:1-11](#)). Peter was

zealous for God, but He was mistaken and ignorant in his zeal. He did not understand that God was planning to save the world through the death of His Son. Peter's behavior is the way of the world. It is the natural, carnal mind. We just rebel and recoil against the idea of a Suffering Savior who dies for the sins of the world, a Suffering Savior who demands the same sacrifice and denial of His followers. Such an idea is unacceptable and repulsive. But, it's God's way. See you in church.

