

Immanuel Lutheran Mail Ministry



Mark 8:27-38 *And 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?"²⁸ And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets."²⁹ And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul?³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

"Get behind me!" As far as I can figure, when someone says "Get behind me," they might have one of three different ideas in mind. If you said, "Get behind me," you might be telling someone, "Get out of my way, don't try to stop me. Get behind me!" Or you could possibly mean, "I'll lead, you follow, get behind me." Like you're going to a reception after a wedding and you tell someone that doesn't know the way, "Follow me, get behind me, I know the way." Or, a third possible meaning would be, "I'll save you, I'll protect you. Get behind me." Like if you're on a walk with your family, and a giant unleashed dog starts barking at you, and you tell your kids, "Get behind me." Those are the three different ideas that I figure this phrase can mean, and Jesus means all of them when He says to Peter, **"Get behind me, Satan!"** And He means all three ideas when He says to *you*, **"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."**

We'll take these words of our Savior to heart as we consider the theme:

Jesus Says, "Get Behind Me."

- I. Because the Cross is Necessary.
- II. Because He Leads and You Follow.
- III. Because He Will Protect and Save you.

Could you imagine rebuking Jesus? Getting up in the face of the Son of God, taking Him aside, and saying, "Look, Jesus, I don't know how to tell you this, but you're all mixed up on this, you're going the wrong way." The gall to tell the Son of God that He's all mixed up, it's almost unbelievable. Why does Peter have this response to Jesus?

Up until this point, Jesus has been teaching His disciples that He is the Christ. He's desired that His disciples would come to this conclusion not by just outright telling them who He is, but through the Holy Spirit working in Jesus' teachings and actions. And here in chapter 8, it all finally takes place. Jesus asks them, "Who am I?" And Peter, answering on behalf of the disciples says, **"You are the Christ."**

Immediately after this, after they understand the lesson of who Jesus is, He begins to teach them what this means, as we read ***“And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.”*** He *began* to teach them, our text says, and He will continue to do so. Lesson one, completed: “I am the Christ.” Lesson two, on-going: “What does it mean that I’m the Christ? And what does it mean for you?”

That’s exactly what He’s beginning to explain here, and notice He doesn’t use parables or metaphors, ***“He said this plainly,”*** our text says. There’s no way to misunderstand what He’s saying. And He speaks with extreme clarity and precision. He says this in v. 31, that He will suffer many things, He will be betrayed—not just by anyone, but by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, the leaders of the church—and then He will be killed. He just lays right out there a play-by-play summary of everything that will happen, even the antagonists involved. And notice that all of the verbs which Jesus is using are passive, so these things will be happening *to* Him. Someone else will cause Him to suffer, someone else will reject Him, someone else will kill Him, Jesus will allow all of these things to happen as they are *done to* Him. Even though He could have stopped all of this, He would not. Instead, He would be led like a lamb to the slaughter, opening not His mouth. (cf. Isaiah 53:7)

But then notice at the end of that description, there’s a subtle change. This one little verb which is not passive. He will, ***“After three days rise again.”*** He will rise. Unlike the rest of those verbs in that verse, this one is active active. Jesus is saying, that, finally, after everything is done *to Him*, He Himself will stand up. He will rise, and no one will ever do anything *to* Him ever again. He will take up His power and His glory, and He will reign, and He will conquer, and He will win. He will now be the active force, and it will be glorious.

But Peter doesn’t hear that last part. He’s too disturbed by the first part, “Woah, woah, woah, Jesus, let’s go back to that other thing you said.” To Peter, it is just plain wrong that the Christ should be shamed and scorned, that the Messiah should die. Because in his mind, the Messiah is this champion who wins, so how could he die? In Peter’s mind, everything that Jesus just said destroys the picture that he has imagined of what the Christ would be. It’s just like with the disciples on the road to Emmaus on Easter afternoon, when they’re walking and talking, and they’re bemoaning the fact that Jesus died. Jesus, who was so great in everything He did, they explained, was arrested and crucified. ***“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”*** (Luke 24:21) They just don’t get it.

Undoubtedly, as Peter revolts at the idea of His master being killed, he’s also wondering about what this means for him. After all, if they’re going to do this to the Christ, what’s going to happen to the people that follow Him. And so, Peter thinks, “Jesus is wrong. He’s mistaken about what will happen next.” So, he takes Jesus aside and rebukes Him, and Jesus turns it back on Peter. ***“Get behind me, Satan. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”*** Jesus tells him, He **MUST** suffer and be rejected and be killed. Literally, in the Greek, Jesus is saying, “It is necessary,” that these things take place. This is the whole point! For Jesus to walk step by bloody step on the way to the cross, and nothing is going to stop Him from fulfilling His mission.

“Get behind me, Satan.” Here again, Jesus comes face to face with the old evil foe; last week we saw this confrontation between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness, and now the devil comes and tempts Him through the mouth of a friend and a believer. And that should be a good warning to each of us that although we are believers, our sinful flesh is still in league with Satan and controlled by him, and at any moment is a powerful source of temptation both for ourselves and others. And Jesus is saying

to our flesh, "Get behind me." He's also teaching us to say to our sinful flesh with all of its impulses, "Get behind me." Do not get in the way of my Christ.

But Jesus also adds the idea of "Get behind me and follow me." In fact, the same Greek word is used twice here in just a few verses, but unfortunately our English translations translate this word differently in the two spots. When Jesus rebukes Peter, "**Get behind me,**" and then just a short time later says, "**if anyone would come after me,**" the word for behind and after, it's the same exact word in the Greek. This is intentional; Jesus is drawing a connection here. To be a disciple means to both say to your sinful flesh, "Get behind me," and then to watch where Jesus is going and to follow Him. To be a disciple of Christ means to "**Deny [yourself], take up [your] cross, and follow [Jesus.]**" Peter doesn't really want to do that at this moment, and neither do we generally, because it is painful.

I read this post on Facebook back when I was in Seminary, and like with every feel-goody religious post on Facebook, my false doctrine guards were all the way up as I read it. And really, you have to do that with those types of Facebook posts because they almost always completely miss the point of Scripture, like with this one. It was a story about a Christian man carrying a giant cross over his shoulder, and it was almost too difficult to bear. But as he went on his way, he saw lots of other Christians with much smaller crosses, seemingly much easier to carry. Then he saw one man whose cross was so small he could hang it on a necklace around his neck. He saw a woman who just tucked her cross in her pocket so that you couldn't even tell it was there. And he thought that sounded like a good idea, and so little by little he started whittling away at his cross. As his cross got lighter, his life became easier. He started amassing more wealth, gaining more friends. In order to keep up with his new companions, he kept cutting away and cutting away at his cross until he too could conveniently put it in his pocket.

And then one day, the story went, he came to this deep chasm, extremely deep with no bottom and no end to the left or the right. On the other side was his home, with peace and rest and feasting and songs. But there was no bridge in sight, seemingly no way to get home. And then an elderly woman struggled up alongside, stooped under the weight of a full cross, and she laid it down across the chasm and passed over it to the other side, her cross disappearing behind her. The man pulled out his tiny cross from his pocket and thought with remorse at all the times he'd cut it down and whittled it away for some fleeting joy, some passing fancy, and now he could not pass to the other side.

Kind of an impactful story, but do you understand why my false doctrine sirens were blaring in my head as I read it? The problem with this story is that it implies that it's *our* ability to carry our crosses which allow us to cross the chasm and get into heaven. And, of course, that's not true. The bridge that crosses the gap between sin and grace, between earth and heaven is not our crosses, but Christ's. It was *Christ's* ability to carry the cross for us that gains us our entrance into heaven.

Nevertheless, it is still good to remember that *our* crosses in life are intimately linked to Christ's. You cannot lighten one without destroying the other. He says, "**If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**" There's going to be a price to pay, Jesus says. He's giving you the free gift of full forgiveness and even salvation, but in giving you that gift, there will also be a burden. The reason the world hates you, the reason the devil assaults you and tempts you is *BECAUSE* you have faith in Jesus. If you did not have faith, the devil would happily leave you alone because you'd already be his. The cross of suffering is the result of the great gift Christ has given you and because of this, it is a most blessed cross. It is yours because you are saved. It's not something to

be cut down when it's inconvenient. It's not something to be whittled away in exchange for temporary earthly pleasures.

That's what Peter was doing. He saw what Jesus was saying because Jesus spoke plainly, and he didn't like it. "I don't like where this is going, this shouldn't be going to a cross." Jesus says, "You are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man. It is *necessary* that I go to the cross, and it is necessary for you to take up your cross as well." Because this can only go one of two ways. As Jesus says, "***For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.***" Either, little by little, you reach to grab more of the things of this life and in so doing let go of Christ's cross, or you reach out to hold tightly to the cross, and in so doing, you lose, little by little, many of the joys of this world. It's inevitable. It can only go one of two ways, and one way ends with Christ in heaven.

When we see this, we ought to be struck by a sense of our own inability to do this. In our collect prayer, we said, "*God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities!*" We need Him. We need Him and His Spirit and His Word to come teach us to say to our flesh, "Get behind me, Satan." To every temptation to leave behind his cross and go after the pleasures of life, may He help us say, "Get behind me, get out of my way." He comes and teaches us that His cross is necessary to save us, and He teaches that our crosses are necessary because He has saved us. The more burdened we are by our crosses in life, the more we're reminded that we have no strength, that things are not well in this world, and that we need Christ on His cross for true life.

And that's the last meaning behind Christ's **Get Behind Me**, He says, "Get behind me, so I can protect and save you." Because this enemy that you face is far beyond you. We are reminded every day that we are simply not strong enough—not strong enough to combat the temptations that come our way, not strong enough to bear up under the crosses that God allows in our life, and, instead, we lose hope and we lose heart. And this is the point, God uses these things to say to you, "You can't do this, you're not strong enough. So get behind me, because I am strong enough, I will protect you."

He would not allow anything to stop Him from going to the cross, from walking to Calvary, from being hoisted up upon that tree, to bear in silence the sins of the world in order to conquer the devil and death and all its power, all so that He could protect you. So that you could hide in the shadow of His cross. You can hide there behind Christ's cross, so that God the Father does not look upon your sins but sees only the death of His beloved Son, only the cross traced over you. Then hiding behind the cross, you cannot see death or the grave except through the cross and the death of Jesus. And when you see the grave only through the death of Jesus, all terror is taken away. This is what Jesus is teaching us: it is by His cross that we bridge the gap, by His cross that we are brought to eternal life. "Get behind me, and I will save you."

Jesus tells us, be prepared to lose your life, deny yourself and take up your crosses. "***For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.***" Tough as that might sound for us, that's what your Savior did. He had all things, and He gave it up so that He might have you. He held everything in His hands, and He let it go to hold you. He lost His life so that He might save you and raise you up. He's saying, "Get behind me, I'll protect you. Get behind my cross, it's your salvation. Get behind me, because I am the way, the truth and the life." As hard as this road is, and as great as your tribulations are, remember what's waiting—the feasting, and the song, and the rest, and peace, and eternal life, and it's all yours behind Christ. Thanks be to God. Amen.