

### **3-14-21**

Sermon- Son of Man Must Suffer?

Scripture- Mark 8:31-38, CTW PS 22:23-31

Hymns- 73, 668, 461

Theme- The name for Jesus, "Son of Man", is Jesus' most common title He uses for himself. It comes from Daniel 7:13, where the Son of Man is a heavenly figure, who, in the end times has authority and power. The name refers to Jesus as the Messiah, the representative of man, the human agent of God who is vindicated by God. What does that mean to you?

#### **I. Introduction: Making Choices**

##### **A. Do you avoid things that make you uncomfortable?**

Satan tempted Jesus and offered Him the easy way when He was in the wilderness but Jesus chose the hard way. Satan tempted Jesus with easy routes to being a king but Jesus chose the cross. For Christians who follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we know that the cross comes before the crown.

How many of us follow Jesus knowing that our life and witness will provoke others?

When Hitler began interfering with the churches and humiliating the German Jews, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a loyal German himself, began to resist and protest. He refused to participate in the state church which bowed to the fuehrer's demands.

Several of Bonhoeffer's colleagues begged him to bend. They argued that they would lose the opportunity to preach altogether if they followed Bonhoeffer's example.

Were Bonhoeffer's critics correct? Bonhoeffer who never wavered in his witness, later became a prisoner at a Nazi concentration camp, and was able to write prolifically. His colleagues were all executed by hanging not long before the end of WWII.

Borrowing from the words of Jesus, how can we give to Caesar what belongs to God? Do we resist our cross or embrace it? Are

we ashamed of the Gospel or do we preach the Gospel in word and deed, regardless of the consequences?

The theme of our passage for today therefore becomes the cross, and the challenges of carrying that cross.

## **II. Who was the crowd mentioned in Verse 34? “He called the Crown to Join His Disciples”.**

**A. Who are the faces in the crowd? Much like today, the crowd was full of believers and unbelievers, haves and have nots, the saved and the lost.**

They were the result of something called a **Caste System**. Caste systems are all about social classes. If you were born poor or wealthy, then likely you would be poor or wealthy all of your life. In effect, the Gospel of Jesus is a wrecking ball for the caste systems.

There are no classes or castes systems for Christian disciples because we are all one in the Body of Christ. There are no divisions in the Body of Christ, only believers because the ground is level at the cross (**Galatians 3:28**).

The thing is that we are all sinners who cannot be saved except by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, regardless of what we think our status is.

Think about our crowd today...How many are divided today and why? People are divided over various things. Politics, religion and race, are at the top of the list.

**1. Dividing idols:** Nothing that divides us can save us! Did you hear that? I want to say it again. Nothing that divides us can save us! No government, person, party, leader, group, church membership roll or ideal can save us! Do we make idols of the things that divide us? Only Jesus saves! How can we focus on unity and the level ground of the cross if we focus on what divides us?

**2. Grace and salvation:** Neither governments, politics, politicians, leaders, religion, vocation or race can save us! Only Jesus saves us from ourselves, from our sins and from the wrath

to come because He is the only Way, the only Truth and the only Way (**John 14:6**).

Again, we are all sinners saved only by God's grace through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 2:8**). Whether or not we own it, we are all sinners who will one day face judgement with or without grace! That is a decision that is made in this life. It is made in this life only! Life is not a dress rehearsal!

As today's lesson in verses 35-37 says: (35) 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. (36) For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? (37) Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

### **III. The Significance of the Cross**

**A. What do you think of when you see a cross?** Some wear a cross just as an ornamental piece of jewelry. Others, mock the cross by using the cross as an upside down symbol. For those in the first century, the cross was a sign of death.

1. Back then, the cross was an **instrument of execution**: It was used as an instrument of execution where they would have flogged, scourged or whipped (all different wordings of the same thing) the criminals before they were crucified which of course means being nailed to a cross. They usually left the dead bodies on crosses to deteriorate.

2. The Cross was a **stumbling block**: **I Corinthians 1:18** says "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (NRSV).

When Mark Twain and his daughter traveled across Europe together, they were honored at every stop. Royalty and famous artists and famous scientists hosted them.

Near the end of the trip, Twain's daughter, impressed by his notoriety, said, "Papa you seem to know everybody but God himself, don't you?" Again, **Mark 8:35-37**, seems to say that people like that do exist.

**B. Why did Peter rebuke Jesus in verse 32?** There was a notion in the time of Jesus's ministry among us as the Word of God made flesh that the Messiah would be a leader who would be like a **military hero---a militant Messiah**. Peter may have been looking for that to come out in Jesus.

But there is a flaw in this militant Messiah notion...it seems to suggest that they were thinking in terms of military conquest.

But, God's ways are not our ways: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (**Isaiah 55:9**).

Also, see **1 Corinthians 1:27** "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong".

There is an obligation to Carry the Cross. **Mark 1:38** says "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.

Peter's words were an echo of the temptations that Satan had thrown at Jesus in the wilderness because Jesus addressed him the same way He addressed Satan who tempted Jesus in the wilderness (**Mark 8:33, Matthew 4:10**).

As Oswald Chambers once said, "All heaven is interested in the cross of Christ, all hell is terribly afraid of it, while men are the only beings who more or less ignore its meaning".

#### **IV. We Must Engage the Challenges!**

**A. There are words that describe the challenges we face in carrying our own crosses, which we should remember:**

**1)Conformity:** How many are there in the world today who are being told "conform" or suffer the consequences? How many are censored or demonized for dissenting points of view? How many are there in the world today who give ultimatums telling Christians that we must conform or pay the price?

William Barclay in his commentary on this set of verses once said, "There are certain things that are lost by being kept but are saved by being used". In other words, how many are losing their

lives trying to save their lives instead of losing their lives for Jesus's sake?

**2) Chameleon Christianity:** Someone once labeled Christians who try to blend in with the crowd as "chameleon Christians." Christians are not called to blend but to bring changes. We are called to "go against the grain!" That is what it means to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world?

**3) Provocative Witness:** Our witness can provoke people who disagree with us. We can be censored. We can even be called out as a dissenter when we won't comply.

Consider **Romans 12:1-2**: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds**, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."

**4) Popularity:** I believe that we as Christians may be entering into a time of great persecution. What is more important in God's eyes to do what is **right** or what is **popular**? How many in our world today do what is popular to avoid standing out?

A friend who has a cabin in Maine found it overrun with mice--too many to exterminate with traps. So he bought a few boxes of D-Con and distributed them around the house, including one under his bed. That night he couldn't believe his ears; below him was a feeding frenzy. In the morning he checked the box and found it licked clean. Just to make sure the plan worked, he bought and placed another box. Again, the mice went for the flavored poison like piranha. But the tasty and popular nighttime snack did its deadly work. In the days that followed, all was quiet.

**Just because something is popular doesn't mean it's good for you. It can be deadly--like sin.**

**4) Avoidance:** Can we **avoid** carrying our crosses? Jesus told Peter that we could not **avoid** carrying our crosses. That is also what Jesus tells us. Carrying our crosses is about denying ourselves picking up our crosses and following Jesus.

Jesus told us that others will know that we are disciples by the way we love (**John 13:34-35**). That means we **love** our **neighbors** in the same way the Samaritan loved a **neighbor**---a stranger in need who was different.

That means we **love** those just like us, those who are different from us, and even our enemies (**Matthew 5:43-45**).

That means we **pray** for them----our enemies, we turn the other cheek when they attack us (**Matthew 5:39**) and practice the **Golden Rule** by being loving to others even when they are not loving to us in return (Matthew 7:12).

We **ARE** the **keepers** of our brothers and sisters (**Genesis 4:9**). That means we don't abandon our brothers and sisters if we disagree with them. We don't kick them when they are down. Instead, we do what Jesus would do.

We **ARE Fishers** of people: We share the Gospel with the last, the least and the lost. We remember that we are the only Jesus that some will ever see.

We remember how important it is to **meet together** to encourage one another. **Hebrews 10:24-25**: "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching".

In her book about Christian types, Joyce Landorf says "**Balcony people**" are those who affirm others and lift them. "**Basement people**" on the other hand, drag people down and belittle them. There are many ways of dividing people in the world---good and bad, sheep and goats, givers and grabbers, have and have-nots. God has called us to be **balcony people!**

We are called to remember that we all have an **expiration date**. We are remnants chosen by grace and reminded in **Romans 11:25** to pick up our crosses and share the Gospel like tomorrow will never come.

Jesus says to us all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow

me (Luke 9:23). Recalling from our text today (Mark 8:31 -38) we must take to heart what Jesus said, (35) " 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. (36) For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? (37) Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? (38) 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" (NRSV).

Let us pick up our crosses and follow in the footsteps of Jesus!  
Let these words of our Savior always be upon our hearts...Amen?  
Let us pray...